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MURDERING ANGELS: VIRGINIA WOOLF'S FEMINIST AESTHETIC

by

(C) MARNI L. STANLEY

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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MURDERING ANGELS: VIRGINIA WOOLF'S FEMINIST AESTHETIC

submitted by Marni L. Stanley in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date Sept. 24, 1982

DEDICATION

To Professors S. C. Neuman and P. D. Clements.

To Dr. Clements for introducing me to Woolf in the best of environments, and to Dr. Neuman for her efforts and encouragements without which this work would be nought.

And to them both--for letting me glimpse and gain inspiration from the continuation of the tradition of intellectual women in my own time and place.

ABSTRACT

Many of Virginia Woolf's strongest characters are female and many of her books have at their centre a concern with the private and public lives of women. Woolf's commitment to feminist issues is amply evidenced by their dominance in her criticism and short fiction as well as in her novels. This thesis attempts to uncover some of the feminist statements in her work and to place them within the broader perspective of her discussions of women in general.

The first chapter explores the character of Woolf's aesthetic and the role feminist thinking played in its formation. After a brief discussion of the Formalist theories prevalent in Bloomsbury, the chapter deals with the feminist politics of Woolf's aesthetic. The passage from the "Speech before the London/National Society for Women's Service" about killing "the angel in the house" is central to this discussion.

Woolf wrote about the concept of a "Woman's sentence" and the second chapter takes up a discussion of that notion based on Woolf's brief comments. Working from and expanding on Woolf's definition, I attempt to examine the evidence for such a notion, applying Woolf's criteria to examples from, among others, Joyce, Lawrence, Austen and, of course, Woolf herself.

A discussion of the notion of female sexual metaphor forms the basis for the third chapter. I believe Woolf successfully used metaphor to free herself from many of the conservative conventions of her day and her books do discuss the sexuality of women though primarily in figurative,

rather than explicit, language. Using three main metaphor groups--solid objects, land and seascapes, and flying creatures--I discuss the ways in which Woolf uses each group to explore different aspects of female sexuality. All three groups seem to emphasize the stress Woolf placed on mental chastity or personal integrity.

The fourth chapter examines the much discussed notion of androgyny and concludes that, contrary to much of the Woolf criticism available, Woolf actually dismissed androgyny quite quickly and turned instead to a celebration of the differences in the male and female sensibilities. Linked to this is a brief discussion of the female artist and her need for personal integrity rather than a merging with the animus.

A brief concluding statement attempts to place Woolf in her rightful position in the tradition of literary women she celebrated.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations of works by Virginia Woolf are used in the text of this thesis:

BA. Between the Acts. London: Granada Publishing, 1978.

HH. A Haunted House and Other Short Stories. Ed. Leonard Woolf. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1972.

JR. Jacob's Room. London: Granada Publishing, 1976.

MD. Mrs. Dalloway. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1953.

MDP. Mrs. Dalloway's Party. Ed. Stella McNichol. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973.

N&D. Night and Day. London: Granada Publishing, 1978.

O. Orlando. London: Granada Publishing, 1978.

P. The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of "The Years". Ed. M. A. Leaska. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977.

Rm. A Room of One's Own. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975.

TG. Three Guineas. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977.

TTL. To the Lighthouse. London: Granada Publishing, 1979.

VO. The Voyage Out. London: Granada Publishing, 1978.

W. The Waves. London: Granada Publishing, 1980.

CHAPTER I

KILLING THE ANGEL: ESTABLISHING THE FEMINIST AESTHETIC

Virginia Woolf's association with Bloomsbury and with the various artists, philosophers, and critics who formed the group and the fact that the group was of primary importance to the development of her aesthetic are well documented elsewhere.[1] Woolf seems to have been particularly influenced by the Formalist aesthetics of Clive Bell and Roger Fry and her commitment to exploration in form and to artistic expression follows from their theories. Her commitment to feminism, however, and the way in which it shaped and altered that Formalist aesthetic, have their roots in her own experience. Bell and Fry helped her to come to terms with some of the aesthetic concerns that confronted her, while her continued pursuit and support of a female tradition in novel writing helped her to cope with some of the pressures that confronted an intellectual woman of her time. The formal considerations of her novels show us how much Woolf was indebted to the concepts of art that surrounded her in Bloomsbury, but their content, and the content of a substantial portion of her critical writings as well, show how deeply she believed in the need to specifically explore the consciousness and the problems of women. Over and over again Woolf made it clear that the problems of a woman writer were not quite the same as those that confronted a man, and that, however much one struggled to overcome or ignore that fact, more was to be gained by an exploration of the

differences than by a denial of them.

What I mean by Woolf's feminism is easily defined: her ongoing interest in and commitment to women, both of which are amply evidenced by her life and work. Woolf wrote books that explored women's consciousness through the new stream of consciousness technique and she tried, to the limits of her daring, to explore the feelings, both mental and physical, of women. I am interested in Virginia Woolf as a <u>woman</u> writer, using the term not in any belittling sense, but simply as a way of differentiating, of saying, Virginia Woolf was not a man writer. She believed in a tradition of women writers and she was a devoted and sensitive critic of that tradition. As a scholar of that tradition she reviewed, praised, chided, re-evaluated, rediscovered and defended against ridicule and censure, works by various women. The difference between being a woman and being a man was important to Woolf not as a way of dividing or categorizing, of defining reason and passion as male or sensitivity and emotion as female, but as a way of asserting a difference of sensibility without claiming some components as exclusively female, others as uniquely male. It was the overall difference, the difference of tone we might call it, rather than the individual differences that fascinated her.

Woolf's feminism grew out of her experiences as a woman in a time when there was a more than usual dose of hypocrisy governing society's treatment of women. Her aesthetic, too, grew out of her environment. Surrounded by artists and philosophers in Bloomsbury, she had access to lively discussions of complex aesthetic theories. As she grew older and her work matured Woolf came, I believe, to see her feminism and her aesthetic as inextricably linked. From the philosophers around her she

drew many of her complex theories of form. In the earliest of her novels, The Voyage Out, the concern with women is in the story but in the later works it becomes part of the form itself. As early as Mrs. Dalloway we see the blend of form and content. The consciousness of the book itself seems to belong to Clarissa Dalloway; we cannot extricate her character from the form. The same is true of The Years where the females of the Pargiter clan seem to dominate, particularly the matriarchal but childless Eleanor. In Woolf's last novel, Between the Acts, the form is dominated by the consciousness of three women, Miss La Trobe, Mrs. Swithins, and Isa Oliver. In that Woolf has managed to make her concern with women an aspect of form as well as content I think it fair to say that she has truly arrived at a feminist aesthetic. In order to comprehend the whole, however, it is necessary to understand the parts, so let us begin with a brief look at Formalism as it existed in Bloomsbury.

The Formalist theory promulgated by Bell in Art and Fry in Vision and Design clearly finds its source in G. E. Moore's Principia Ethica, the famous book that was so often at the centre of early Bloomsbury discussions. Bell's argument, that significant form may be intuited, owes much to Moore's concept of good which is also intuitively understood.[2] Also, while Moore found the spiritual superior, he nonetheless asserted the importance of the material, particularly in regard to beauty, as did the aestheticians Fry and Bell. Above all Moore celebrated friendship and love balanced by the quest for knowledge and the pursuit of aesthetic experience--the very ideals grasped by the Bloomsbury group.[3]

As a member of the group Woolf, too, read Moore and discussed him with her Bloomsbury friends; but she never took aesthetics quite as

seriously as she took art. When she records these discussions in her memoir of "old Bloomsbury" she cannot help but poke fun at their youthful seriousness:

> [i]t filled me with wonder to watch those who were finally left in the argument piling stone upon stone, cautiously, accurately, long after it had completely soared above my sight . . . . One had glimpses of something miraculous happening high up in the air . . . . Saxon would be taking his pipe from his mouth as if to speak, and putting it back again without having spoken. At last, rumpling his hair back, he would pronounce very shortly some absolutely final summing up. The marvellous edifice was complete, one could stumble off to bed feeling that something very important had happened. It had been proved that beauty was--or beauty was not--for I have never been quite sure which --part of a picture.[4]

While Woolf is self-deprecating in her implication that she could not follow the discussion, her summation of the argument suggests that the edifice was not quite so architecturally sound as some of the young philosophers might have wished it.

The emphasis Moore placed on beauty and aesthetic experience was translated by Clive Bell and Roger Fry into the notion of significant form. Fry and Bell both agree that what is essential to a work of art is not just the form in the physical sense of the word but the "idea." As Bell acknowledged, "[t]he starting point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a specific emotion,"[5] and furthermore, "[t]heories not based on broad and deep aesthetic experience are worthless."[6] Fry, less specific in his definition of the concept than Bell, defines significant form only hesitantly and concludes that:

> [w]e feel that a work which possesses [significant form] is the outcome of an endeavor to express an idea rather than to create a pleasing object . . . . One can only say that those who experience it feel it to have a peculiar quality of "reality" which makes it a matter of infinite importance in their lives.[7]

Ever leery of the elusive and excessively esoteric, which led, in his words, to "the depths of mysticism,"[8] Fry delighted in the obvious as well as the obscure. He celebrated "the rediscovery of the principles of structural design and harmony"[9] and suggested that there were five elements, "rhythm, mass, spatial judgement, light and shade, and colour"[10] that were capable of arousing emotion. "The first quality that we demand in our sensations will be order," he wrote, "without which our sensations will be troubled and perplexed, and the other quality will be variety, without which they will not be fully stimulated."[11] Fry's consideration of the elements important in visual art could easily be descriptive of Woolf's writing as well. Particularly in The Waves, arguably her most Formalist work, we can see the importance of "rhythm, mass, spatial judgement, light and shade, and colour." It is the consideration of those five elements in Woolf's novel that create the ebb and flow of the waves from the earliest scene where those five elements fill the consciousness of the characters as children, to the conclusion, where, in the complexities of the fully adult consciousness, the elements have retreated to the background but are nonetheless essential.

The Waves opens, after the introductory descriptive passage, with the five characters as children responding to the sensual world around them. They describe what they see, dividing their perceptions into the elements Fry considered essential:

> 'I see a ring,' said Bernard, 'hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light.'
>
> 'I see a slab of pale yellow,' said Susan, 'spreading away until it meets a purple stripe.'
>
> . . . . . .
>
> 'I see a globe,' said Neville, 'hanging down in a drop against the enormous flanks of some hill.' (W., p. 6)

As the characters age their environment and their responses become more complex. But those five essential elements remain as the structuring force of the narrative. Over and over again in the novel you can find them in a single paragraph, all together in the space of a few lines. Let us take, for example, this section from the concluding paragraphs:

> [a]nother day; another Friday; another twentieth of March, January, or September. Another general awakening. The stars draw back and are extinguished. The bars deepen themselves between the waves. The film of mist thickens on the fields. A redness gathers on the roses, even on the pale rose that hangs by the bedroom window. A bird chirps. Cottagers light their early candles. Yes, this is the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again. (W., p. 200)

In Woolf's hands Fry's five elements are no longer essential merely to art; they are basic to the very pulse of life.

In many ways the Formalist concepts of Art and Vision and Design are a manifesto for Post-Impressionism. The Formalist theorists revolted against art as representation and against the direct expression of what were primarily didactic ideas by the Academy painters. Bell, because of his dissatisfaction with the morality and sentimentality of the technically skilled but unimaginative Victorians, chose to emphasize the physical characteristics of the rebellion at the risk of losing sight of the importance of content. Formalism allowed the eye to be delighted by the sheer sensual beauty of line and colour after years of being over-burdened with tedious detail and pretentious craftsmanship. Furthermore, it freed the spectator to perceive the essence of and to respond emotionally to an object, say a vase of flowers, without having an explicit rendition of one before her.

The Formalist dissatisfaction with the limitations of Victorian art parallels Woolf's responses to writers like Bennett and Galsworthy as

typified by her comments in "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown." In this essay of 1924 Woolf criticized "the Edwardians"[12] for laying too much "stress upon the fabric of things. They have given us a house in the hope that we may be able to deduce the human beings who live there."[13] Woolf is as bored with their circuitous details as Fry and Bell were bored with William Powell Frith, Augustus Egg, and the other Academy painters.

The significant form possessed by a work of art is an embodiment of the "idea" present in the work which, in turn, is a manifestation of the creator's or artist's sensibility. One aspect of that sensibility was sex. Thus, if Woolf wished for significant form, she had to be true to her own sensibility and that meant that her femaleness partly determined the aesthetic properties of her work. Woolf experienced the female sensibility as differentiated from the male and celebrated it as a separate entity. She also wrote on the female tradition and went so far as to propose a "woman's sentence" (as I shall discuss in the next chapter). When placed in the context of the Formalist discussion which surrounded her in Bloomsbury, these facts lead us to her own conclusion--that her experiences as a woman must partly determine the "significant form" of her work. Woolf was a feminist and she held the Formalist convictions on the nature of significant form to be true. Thus it follows that her aesthetic must be feminist as well.

Woolf repeatedly makes the seemingly obvious point that a woman is not a man and that her sensibility differs as much from a man's as does her body. Her two major feminist essays, A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas, both explore aspects of this concern. In A Room of One's Own the central issue is the tradition of women writers and the possibilities Woolf sees, through the persona of a fictional author,

Mary Carmichael, for new freedoms in the prose of the future. Three Guineas explores the lives of the daughters of educated men and the controls imposed upon them by a patriarchal society. More radical and polemical in tone than A Room of One's Own, Three Guineas concludes that women must become "outsiders" (TG., p. 122) if they are to preserve "chastity" of mind (TG., p. 92). In Three Guineas Woolf argues that society has emphasized the wrong kind of chastity, that the integrity of a pure mind is of a much greater value than that of a pure body. This theory of mental chastity informed her fiction as well, and, as I shall try to make clear in a discussion of Woolf's use of metaphor, the success and happiness she allows her characters, particularly the women, is often in direct proportion to their ability to preserve mental integrity. As if trying to find a solution to the sexual divisions her theories suggest, Woolf also considers the issue of androgyny, the rather utopian merging of the male and female sensibility to create a single superior sensitivity. I believe, as I will argue in my final chapter, that Woolf ultimately rejected the possibility of androgyny as a false utopia and returned, by the end of her career, back to an assertion of the differences between the sexes and their perceptions.

Woolf's feminist aesthetic included a consideration of the language of women, of their integrity, of the validity of their difference, and all these theories found their beginnings in her assertion of what we might call, to paraphrase slightly, the 'difference of view'. At the conclusion of her 1918 review, "The Women Novelists," Woolf wrote,

> finally . . . there rises for consideration the very difficult question of the difference between the man's and the woman's view of what constitutes the importance of any subject. From this spring not only marked differences of plot and incident, but infinite differences in selection, method and style.[15]

Although Woolf goes on to discuss some of these differences in her 1928 essay A Room of One's Own, the key feminist statement of her aesthetic is to be found in the 1931 "Speech before the London/National Society for Women's Service" finally published, in its entirety, in 1977 in the posthumous collection, The Pargiters. In this speech Woolf explores the mythic figure of the angel in the house, describing what it is like for a woman writer to confront this monstrous ghost and why the author must slay her. Because I feel that an understanding of this passage is absolutely crucial to an understanding of Woolf's feminism, particularly as it appears in essays like Three Guineas and "Women and Fiction," I am taking the liberty of quoting a large portion of the relevant passages. Discussing her early career as a reviewer Woolf writes,

> [t]here is a villain in the piece. That villain was not, I grieve to say, our old friend the other sex--Or at least only indirectly. The villain of my story was a woman, and I propose to call her, after a figure in a well known poem, the Angel in the House . . . . She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She soothed, conciliated, sacrificed herself, took the hash if there was only chicken enough for one, and in short was so constituted that she never had a wish or a mind of her own but preferred to sympathise with the wishes and minds of others. Above all--I hope I need not say it--she was pure. There were a great many things that one could not say without bringing a blush to her cheek.[16]

Having established, beyond the possibility of doubt, the virtues of the angel, Woolf then goes on to record the author's first meeting with her:

> when I came to write--though I was not an angel myself--I had five hundred a year and angels never have a penny--there was an Angel in the house with me. The shadow of her wings fell upon the page; I heard the rustling of her skirts in the room. Now this creature--it was one of her most annoying characteristics --never had any real existence. She had--what is much more difficult to deal with--an ideal existence, a fictitious

> existence . . . . The Angel in the house was the ideal of womanhood created by the imaginations of men and women at a certain stage of their pilgrimage to lure them across a very dusty stretch of the journey. They agreed to accept this ideal, because for reasons I cannot now go into--they have to do with the British Empire, our colonies, Queen Victoria, Lord Tennyson, the growth of the middle class and so on--a real relationship between men and women was then unattainable. (P., p. xxx)

At this point Woolf makes it clear that the role of men in the manufacture of this abomination is not quite as indirect as she had at first, somewhat ironically, implied. By the persistence of their fantasies of womanhood, and by their imposition of these fantasies upon their wives, mothers, and daughters, men have helped to create and foster the myth of the angel. In her denunciation of the patriarchy in Three Guineas, Woolf adds that women must kill the "lady" and the "woman" (TG., p. 153) as well as the "angel" if they are to free themselves from the expectations forced upon them. But it is still the angel who must be killed first and here Woolf tells us why:

> when I came to write reviews the Angel in the House stole behind me and said "You have got yourself onto a very queer position. You are young and unmarried. But you are writing for a paper owned by men, edited by men--whose chief supporters are men; you are even reviewing a book that has been written by a man . . . . Therefore whatever you say let it be pleasing to men. Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; use all the arts and wiles which I Heaven help me have used till I am sick of the whole thing (the Angel did sometimes speak like this to women when she was alone) but believe me it is absolutely necessary. Never disturb them with the idea that you have a mind of your own. And above all be pure." With that she made as if to guide my pen.
>
> I now record the one act for which I take some credit--though the credit belongs rather to my income than to me--if one has five hundred a year there is no need to tell lies and it is much more amusing to tell the truth--I turned upon that Angel and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her. My excuse--if I were to be had up in a law court and charged with murder--would be that I acted in self defence. If I had not killed her, she would have killed me--as a writer. That woman--but she was not a woman she was an Angel--has more blood on her hands than all the murderers who have ever been hanged.

> Writer after writer, painter after painter and musicians I dare say too she has strangled and killed. One is always meeting their corpses laid out in biographies. But she has a special hatred of writers and with good reason . . . . writing is a very different matter--you cannot even review a novel without expressing an opinion upon characters, morality, human relations--all matters of vital importance in the conduct of the house and thus coming directly under the notice of its Angel . . . . In short I was forced to attack many of the most sacred objects in the house, and that the Angel did not like. Therefore I did my best to kill her. Whenever I felt the shadow of her wings or the radiance of her halo upon the page I took up the inkpot and flung it at her. But though I flatter myself that I did kill her in the end, the struggle was severe; it took up much more time that had better have been spent in learning Greek grammar or in roaming the world in search of adventures. Well, that is one professional experience--killing the Angel in the House. (P., pp. xxi-xxxiii, emphasis Woolf's)

Woolf makes the struggle seem mock epic, but we don't lose the sense that it is time consuming--even the length of the passage Woolf uses to tell the story emphasizes the sense of time wasted, time that would have been much better spent studying or travelling as men, who have no mythic angel against whom they must battle for survival, are free to do. The Angel is, above all, a threat to the integrity of the woman writer. Her move to guide the pen is the force of the image of the woman as guardian of home and hearth trying to manipulate all women to "be pleasing to men." The stereotype is a corrupt response to the idea of the nurturing female, and, as Woolf makes clear, such fantasies, when they are shared by entire societies as they were in Queen Victoria's day, make "a real relationship between men and women . . . unattainable."

Woolf concluded the portion of her speech devoted to recounting her struggles with the angel with the words:

> [a]ll I can tell you is that I discovered when I came to write that a woman--it sounds so simple, but I should be ashamed to tell you how long it took me to realise this for myself--is not a man. Her experience is not the same. Her traditions are different. Her values, both in art and in life are her own. (P., p. xxxiii)

The difference of values is an important one to Woolf, yet as a writer she felt denied the ability to explore that, and other, differences. After a brief excursion into a theory of androgyny in the 1920's Woolf remained convinced of the importance of the assertion of the differences between men and women for the remainder of her career, growing more insistent as she grew older. But she felt, as a woman writer confronted by seemingly endless books by men and a precious few by women, that only half of the story of differences was ever told. What female voices there were, she realized, were often either directly or indirectly censored; she often uses a metaphor of fishing to explain the process of imaginative thinking and its censorship. In one such discussion the fishing line (the imagination) hits an obstacle--the obstacle of stereotypes and expectations and pressures from the male-dominated society. Woolf got around that obstacle, as I discuss later, partly through the use of metaphor. In this speech of 1931, when the fisherwoman/author drops her line into the depths of her unconscious, it goes slack and floats up to the surface. The reason for its sudden lifelessness is its lack of experience; as Woolf wittily stages it:

> [t]he reason hauled the imagination on shore and said What on earth is the matter with you? And the imagination began pulling on its stockings and replied, rather tartly and disagreeably: it's all your fault. You should have given me more experience to go on. I can't do the whole work for myself. (P., p. xxxviii)

As the parable continues, the fisherwoman/author drops her line again, this time with unexpected success, but suddenly the voice of reason calls a halt. There follows a dialogue between imagination and reason:

> Good heavens [the imagination] cries--how dare you interfere with me! How dare you pull me out with your wretched little

> fishing line. And I--that is the reason--have to reply, "My dear you were going altogether too far. Men would be shocked." Calm yourself, I say, as she sits panting on the bank--panting with rage and disappointment. . . . You see I go on, trying to calm her, I cannot make use of what you tell me--about women's bodies for instance--their passions--and so on, because the conventions are still very strong. If I were to overcome the conventions I should need the courage of a hero, and I am not a hero. (P., pp. xxxviii-xxxix)

Here the reason acts as the obstacle, recognizing the futility of thinking about things that cannot yet be written. Woolf returns to this problem of artificially or externally imposed limitations so many times in so many ways that a reader can only assume that it was one of the major frustrations of her professional career. First experience is denied her, then she is inhibited from discussing those limited experiences which are her own. She cannot write as a man and to attempt to do so is to betray her sex and thus her own consciousness; to write as a "woman," in the sense that the angel sees her, is to further confine herself in an already restrictive time and place.

Obviously Woolf's commitment to feminist concerns is, at least in part, a direct result of her frustrations with the various forms and degrees of censorship that surrounded her. The Pargiters was begun as a novel-essay alternating chapters of fiction with essay commentary. Although Woolf drafted only a relatively small portion of the work before transforming the chapters of fiction into the opening of The Years, she writes disparagingly in the completed essays of the practice of keeping women ignorant of sexuality, of denying them the pleasure in their own bodies that comes from moving about freely, and of teaching them fear of men and of sexuality.

At the same time as Woolf rebelled against the conventions that

confined her, she cast an envious eye in the direction of some of her more controversial male contemporaries. In another part of her speech for the Society for Women's Service--a portion she later excised--she wrote:

> [t]ake Mr Joyce or Proust. One of the achievements of their books is their honesty, their openness, their determination to say everything. For women, the prudery of men is a terrible bugbear. Dr. Johnson said, "we were shocked to see a woman cross her legs". So until the year 1850 (I daresay), women never crossed their legs. Now men are shocked if a woman said what she felt (as Joyce does). Yet literature which is always pulling down blinds is not literature. All that we have ought to be expressed--mind and body--a process of incredible difficulty and danger.
>
> A certain attitude is required--what I call the pouring-out-tea attitude--the clubwoman, Sunday afternoon attitude. I don't know. I think that the angle is almost as important as the thing. What I value is the naked contact of a mind. Often one cannot say anything valuable about a writer--except what one thinks. Now I found my angle incessantly obscured, quite unconsciously no doubt, by the desire of the editor and of the public that a woman should see things from the chary feminine angle. My article, written from that oblique point of view, always went down. (P., pp. 164-65)

Woolf sought out the freedom of choosing her own angles, of varying them, of mixing them, and, while she had some major successes with her experiments in form, she never quite achieved the freedom of content she desired. At least, that seems a logical conclusion considering that her anger at the patriarchal society in which she lived is at its most volatile in Three Guineas, which comes near the end of her career.

Woolf sustained her commitment to women throughout her life. We can find ample evidence of it in her friendships, her diaries, her letters, and in her criticism as well as her fiction. We see it not only in the public statements of A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas, but also in the private anguish of the diary entry in which she records the death of Katherine Mansfield and her own complex reactions of jealousy

and loss:

> [a]t that one feels--what? A shock of relief?--a rival the less? then confusion at feeling so little--then, gradually, blankness and disappointment; then a depression which I could not rouse myself from all that day. When I began to write, it seemed to me there was no point in writing. Katherine won't read it. Katherine's my rival no longer.[17]

We can see her commitment also in the lively and affectionate correspondence with Ethel Smythe to whom Woolf wrote in 1930, "[i]t is true that I only want to show off to women. Women alone stir my imagination."[18] Her feminism was central to her aesthetic in that she felt, as a woman artist, a primary commitment to her sex as well as to her art, a need to be true within her art to the psychology of her sex while maintaining the "outsider" (P., p. 7) status of an artist and observer of life. Woolf was not one to jump on a passing bandwagon. Her dedication to feminist concerns was personal and individual but she never relinquished her commitment, even when she was under attack from friends and foes alike, as she was immediately after the publication of Three Guineas. She never forgot the Angel in the House and she never looked back, pursuing her writing career and "now and again getting up to shy an inkpot at an angel" (P., p. xxxvii). One of the values of art for Woolf was its potential for truth, not a truth based on the realistic representation of human life, but a truth inherent in the idea behind significant form or--in Moore's notion of the good and beauty--a truth that came from the sincere expression of the artist's aesthetic idea. For Woolf one of the most fundamental truths was that she was a woman writer and therefore not a man writer. To fully appreciate Woolf's feminist aesthetic, we must look carefully at her theories as well as at her fiction. Let us continue, then, with a discussion of what Woolf called the "Woman's sentence."[19]

CHAPTER II

THE FEMALE SENTENCE

In A Room of One's Own, Woolf remarks that "[t]here is no mark on the wall to measure the precise height of women" (Rm., p. 85). Nor is there a critical vocabulary established with which we can deal effectively with the works of women writers. Women do not write with one voice, but perhaps among the best of them there are moments of a shared voice. Woolf envisioned an ideal shared voice when she wrote, in A Room of One's Own and in her criticism of individual women writers, of the notion of a "female sentence."[1] "For we think back through our mothers if we are women," Woolf wrote,

> [i]t is useless to go to the great male writers for help, however much one may go to them for pleasure. Lamb, Browne, Thackeray, Newman, Sterne, Dickens, DeQuincy--whoever it may be --never helped a woman yet, though she may have learned a few tricks of them and adapted them to her use. The weight, the pace, the stride of a man's mind are too unlike her own for her to lift anything substantial from him successfully. The ape is too distant to be sedulous. (Rm., p. 76)

Great novelists like Dickens and Thackeray, Woolf argued, wrote with a male sentence that was "unsuited for a woman's use" (Rm., p. 77). But at the same time as she supported the notion of a female sentence, Woolf was aware of the problems such a generalization creates. If the male sentence she analyzed was ideal or archetypal so was the female sentence she proposed. For one thing, many women writers did train themselves on the very male writers whom Woolf lists; thus their sentences were imitations of the male mode rather than departures from it. Woolf felt that George

Eliot and Charlotte Brontë fell into this trap. Imitating the male sentence, Brontë "stumbled and fell" while Eliot "committed atrocities . . . that beggar description" (Rm., p. 77). To some extent it appears that women writers who chose to disguise their identities with a masculine pseudonym carried the charade of a male identity into diction and narrative structure as well.[2] At the other extreme were women like Mrs. Humphrey Ward, the anti-suffragette, who set out to prove the delicacy, sensitivity, and purity of the female mind in a manner which can only be called coy. The writers on both ends of this continuum were responding to criticism, voiced or unvoiced, Woolf argues, which made them conciliatory. Such a writer was always either "admitting that she was 'only a woman,' or protesting that she was 'as good as a man'" (Rm., p. 74). By Woolf's criteria such corruptions of tone and style produced seriously flawed novels.

Within the tradition of the female sentence Woolf allowed Jane Austen and Emily Brontë. Among her contemporaries, she admired Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson (with reservations), and, to a lesser extent, Stella Benson. Ultimately, though, Woolf saw herself as the upholder of the female sentence so it is to her that we look for evidence of its ideal structure and form.

Mary Jacobus, responding to Woolf's notion of female sentence in an essay called "The Difference of View," notes that when we speak of a language for women we do not mean

> a refusal of language itself; nor a return to a specifically feminine linguistic domain which in fact marks the place of women's oppression and confinement. Rather, a process that is played out within language, across boundaries. The dream of a language freed from the Freudian notion of castration, by which female difference is defined as lack rather than Otherness, is

> at first sight essentially theoretical, millennial and Utopian. . . . Difference is redefined, not as male versus female--not as biologically constituted--but as a multiplicity, joyousness and heterogeneity which is that of textuality itself.[3]

What Jacobus desires is an emphasis on text which implicitly includes the notion of expansiveness and freedom. Texts borrow and adapt from and allude to other texts and that is at the root of the "multiplicity, joyousness and heterogeneity . . . of textuality." Such multiplicity suggests a freedom from male and female definitions--a kind of textual androgyny, if you will, an ideal which Jacobus shares with Virginia Woolf.[4]

Woolf complained in her essay "Women and Fiction" of writers whose "vision becomes too masculine or . . . too feminine; it loses its perfect integrity and, with that, its most essential quality as a work of art."[5] For Woolf "integrity," the central vision that formed the text, the "perceptible whole,"[6] is quintessential to the work. Woolf uses the word "integrity" to indicate the condition of being true to the whole. This is related to her celebration of integrity in her characterizations of women in her novels. Just as women must preserve chastity of mind by remaining free of "unreal loyalties" (TG., p. 93), symbolized by the institutions of the patriarchy, so a work must be true to its author's consciousness rather than to the traditions or conventions of a genre. The "whole" takes on the connotations of the solid object (which is discussed at length in the next chapter) for Woolf. As the image of integrity and immutability it remains untouched in its centre; a well written book is its own solid defense. This idea of integrity remained paramount for Woolf throughout her writings unlike the notion of androgyny, which, as we shall see, she quickly abandoned.

The integrity is also, in part at least, a matter of balance

and that includes, at least in Woolf's early writings, the balance between male and female. The aspect of balance in Woolf's notion of the perceptible whole is roughly equivalent to Jacobus' notion of textuality and both writers assume that the fragments of language, ideas, and traces of other texts will find resolution in the finished work. For the woman writer some of these fragments--and I think Woolf would be the first to acknowledge this--are the traces of the male-dominated modes of literature.

Although Jacobus' criteria are essentially compatible with Woolf's, they differ on one major point. In fact, Woolf said of Dorothy Richardson's sentence that,

> [i]t is a woman's sentence, but only in the sense that it is used to describe a woman's mind by a writer who is neither proud nor afraid of anything that she may discover in the psychology of her sex.[7]

Woolf is acknowledging that the female sentence is both psychological and stylistic, a matter of what is said as well as how it is said. She is very close to suggesting the biological determinism which Jacobus shuns.

Is Woolf wrong to suggest that a female style might be "biologically constituted"? Women are different from men. Their sexual and reproductive organs function differently; women's are largely internal while men's are external. Women bear children and menstruate; men do not. Women tend to have a higher pain threshold, more body fat, better manual dexterity at tasks requiring fine finger coordination, and there is now substantial evidence that they use the two halfbrains differently than men. "Women are generally superior to men at verbal tasks, while men perform better on tests of spatial ability. These differences have been explained by evidence that the female brain matures more rapidly and appears to be less lateralized than the male brain."[8] Other more

debatable studies have linked aggression to the male hormone testosterone and have purported to prove that many of the perceived sex differences (such as play tendencies, socialization, etc.) are hormone related. There is substantial evidence to demonstrate that women mature sexually at a different age than men and their sexual capacity is, on the average, greater. Intercourse seems designed to produce male orgasm (necessary for procreation), but not female. Finally there are abundant cultural differences, so far reaching that it is accurate to say that women have a different history from men. For example, Dorothy Dinnerstein's The Mermaid and the Minotaur analyzes the ways in which women have been mythologized into virgins, mothers, whores and monsters throughout the centuries. The means through which the patriarchal system, as the organizing force of society, slowly eliminated women from medicine, education, law, and legislative and civil roles have also been well documented.[9] Assuming all these differences, is it still far-fetched to say that women, who allow themselves the freedom to do so, may indeed write differently from men?

The stereotypes of male and female style suggest that men should write in a vigorous, aggressive, muscular style while women should write in a sensitive, romantic, and emotional voice. Woolf's example of the male sentence is indeed vigorous and muscular:

> [t]he grandeur of their work was an argument with them, not to stop short, but to proceed. They could have no higher excitement or satisfaction than in the exercise of their art and endless generation of truth and beauty. Success prompts to exertion; and habit facilitates success. (Rm., p. 77)

In these sentences, she argues, we can see the echoes of "Johnson, Gibbon, and the rest" (Rm., p. 77). Woolf's own sentences are less self-contained,

more fluid and propulsive:

> [a]nd as it went on I set it against the background of that other talk, and as I matched the two together I had no doubt that one was the descendant, the legitimate heir of the other. Nothing was changed; nothing was different save only--here I listened with all my ears not entirely to what was being said, but to the murmur or current behind it. Yes, that was it--the change was there. (Rm., p. 14)

Woolf's sentences are more spontaneous and rhythmical than the deliberately rigid male version she concocts. The evidence in Thomas J. Farrel's essay "The Female and Male Modes of Rhetoric" suggests that the differences Woolf perceived may have some statistical basis.[10] On the average he found that the female mode is more methetic, open-ended and generative than the male mode which tends to be framed, pre-selected and contained.

The rhetorical organization of both A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas is, in fact, deliberately non-logical in form. Woolf constantly interrupts herself with apparent diversions and digressions. Purportedly chance occurrences are observed within parentheses or dashes, such as in the example above, and the result is an accommodating and spontaneously expansive style. Of course the "chance" occurrences are almost always just the thing to illustrate the point being made, but the ease with which they appear makes the whole argument seem discovered rather than created. The lightness of the wit, even in the angry and much more polemical Three Guineas, produces a different authority than the sweeping generalizations of the male example Woolf provides. Woolf's wit is not self-deprecating--it often veils, and only just barely, some very potent attacks on the patriarchal society--but it does suggest a different notion of authority than the pedantic male model she provides.

In Woolf's non-fictional prose the author is very present in her text; the need for the authoritative and judgmental "we" is gone to be replaced by an equally authoritative but less imposing "I."

For Woolf the ideal female sentence was elastic. She saw this potential in the works of Dorothy Richardson of whom she said,

> [s]he has invented, or . . . developed and applied to her own uses, a sentence which we might call the psychological sentence of the feminine gender. It is of a more elastic fibre than the old, capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes.[11]

If we look back to our two examples (Woolf's concocted male sentence and her own description of a conversation), we can see the effects of this elasticity. Woolf's sentences are more propulsive, more springy and buoyant, more flexible and accommodating, seemingly capable--as her dashes imply--of spontaneous expansion. The male sentences are self-contained, less impulsive, more inclined to sink at the end with the weight of finality. Closing statements like "generation of truth and beauty" and "habit facilitates success" make one want to stop and ponder rather than move on. The sample from Woolf, in contrast, always seems to leave the conclusions in the air. "Nothing was changed" and "yes" begin sentences although they conclude the thoughts of the preceding sentences and thus one idea leads to another with an air of expectancy. Furthermore the male sentences have an abstractness of diction that is absent in most of Woolf's writing.

To be fair, the male sentences Woolf gives are of her own concoction and are, however true to Bennett or Galsworthy or Gibbon they may seem, therefore parodies. A sense of justice compels me to introduce the real thing at this point. In an attempt to give this discussion the

illusion of scientific thoroughness, I have chosen moments of parallel action, namely kisses, from three contemporaries, V. Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, and James Joyce.

> Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down! The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally. And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it--a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up, which, as they walked (up and down, up and down), she uncovered, or the radiance burnt through, the revelation, the religious feeling!
>
> Virginia Woolf (MD., p. 52)

> And suddenly a kiss, there on the back of my neck . . . I took out my watch and marked the hour when I would allow myself to think of the kiss for five minutes only--it was so precious--the kiss of an old grey-haired woman with a wart on her nose, the mother of all my kisses all my life.
>
> Virginia Woolf, "Kew Gardens" (HH., p. 30)

> Julia blazed. Julia kindled. Out of the night she burnt like a dead white star. Julia opened her arms. Julia kissed her on the lips. Julia possessed it.
>
> Virginia Woolf, "Slater's Pins Have No Points (HH., p. 111)

> Richard took her in his arms and kissed her. Holding her tightly, he kissed her passionately, so that she felt the hardness of his body and the roughness of his cheek printed upon hers. She fell back in her chair, with tremendous beats of the heart, each of which sent black waves across her eyes. He clasped his forehead in his hands.
>
> Virginia Woolf (VO., p. 73)

> Then his mouth drew near, pressing open her mouth, a hot, drenching surge rose within her, she opened her lips to him, in pained, poignant eddies she drew him nearer, she let him come further, his lips came and surging, surging, soft, oh soft, yet oh, like the powerful surge of water. . . .
>
> D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975), pp. 299-300.

> And he kissed her face and brow, slowly, gently, with a sort of delicate happiness which surprised her extremely, and to which she could not respond. They were soft, blind kisses, perfect in their stillness. Yet she held back from them. It was like strange moths, very soft and silent, settling on her from the darkness of her soul. She was uneasy.
>
> D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 209-210.

> Her arms were round his neck, he kissed her and held her perfectly suspended, she was all slack and flowing into him, and he was the firm, strong cup that receives the wine of her life. So she lay cast upon him, stranded, lifted up against him, melting and melting under his kisses. . . .
>
> D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love, pp. 373-74.

> He closed his eyes, surrendering himself to her, body and mind, conscious of nothing in the world but the dark pressure of her softly parting lips. They pressed upon his brain as upon his lips as though they were the vehicle of a vague speech; and between them he felt an unknown and timid pressure, darker than the swoon of sin, softer than sound or odour.
>
> James Joyce, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 101.

Now if we use for our criteria of judgment Woolf's measuring stick of elasticity and add to it some of the ideas of Mary Hiatt[12] (who has done extensive, computer-assisted studies of male and female language) we can indeed see a pattern emerging. Hiatt notes that there is a larger incidence of anacoluthia in writing by women, a style which tends to produce a sense of "disconnectedness" or self-interruption. She also found (again this is statistically, these are averages) that women use more devices of repetition, particularly syndetic ones. Specifically the devices which Hiatt found occurring two or three times more frequently in works by women than by men, are asyndeton, polysyndeton, anaphora, tmesis, and triplets.[13] Perhaps it is relevant that the most famous twentieth-century theorist on the narrative uses of repetition was a woman, Gertrude Stein.

Thomas Farrel's descriptions of male and female rhetoric tend to support Hiatt's conclusions as do most of Robin Lakoff's observations in "Women's Language."[14] Lakoff adds (and here Hiatt disagrees) that women are more emotive (except where anger and hostility are concerned), and that they are more hesitant and less declarative which tends to

reduce their illocutionary force. Many of Lakoff's observations in this area tend to reflect a greater reliance on cultural bias than, I think, do Hiatt's findings. If women portray less anger and hostility (and many contemporary feminists seem determined to go to the other extreme on this one), it is because they are trained away from anger. Interestingly enough, Woolf's angriest book, Three Guineas, was also the book that precipitated the most hostile reviews. As Phyllis Chesler has pointed out in Women and Madness,[15] women are encouraged to see their own anger as an emotional illness, not as a legitimate cause or tool for self-expression. Thus critics responded to Woolf's expression of anger with open hostility and accusations that she was destroying the natural order of things.[16] Similarly the politeness and the tendency toward euphemisms that Lakoff observed in women's prose seem to me to be learned rather than innate characteristics.

What then can we make of our examples in light of this information? To begin with, I think it worth noting that, for all Woolf's supposed reticence and for all Lawrence's professed explicitness about sexuality, it is Lawrence who turns kisses into moths, women into wine, and the sexual act into a kind of underwater gymnastics meet. Woolf's metaphor of a kiss being a precious gift and Joyce's that it is a vague speech require much smaller--and less awkward--leaps of imagination. Woolf's kisses are radiant, conjuring diamonds and stars when desired, and blackness when dreaded, as the passages indicate. The kisses in Mrs. Dalloway, "Kew Gardens", and "Slater's Pins" are pleasurable; the one in The Voyage Out is not.

Woolf's use of metaphor is consistent, as we shall see in the next chapter, while Lawrence's is not. Furthermore Woolf always manages

to describe the actual kiss in a sentence of ten words or less while the two men take anywhere from twenty-three to fifty words.

Although her sentences are on the whole shorter, Woolf uses repetition in the examples more consistently than the male writers and towards a different end. Joyce, in the example from Portrait, repeats the word "pressure" and variants of it. This subtly underlines the fact that Stephen, however willing, is, in effect, being seduced in this passage. At the same time the repetition emphasizes his own reciprocal pressure; his erection is the "timid pressure" of the last clause. "Pressure" also picks up the recurrent sibilant sounds which combine with the long vowels to give the passage a slow and langorous pace. The use of sibilants in the passage not only recalls the serpent's hiss, the "swoon of sin," but also reflects the sexual arousal of the characters--the /s/ is a soft, somewhat breathless sound, very sensual in the mouth, very appropriate to a seduction scene.

In the first example from Lawrence and in the "Slater's Pins" example from Woolf the two writers are using repetition heavily towards similar ends, but again the effect is quite different. Both authors seem to want to convey the intensity and explosiveness of sexual pleasure in the language itself. Woolf does it with very short, very intense, explosive and simple sentences which are highly repetitive:

> Julia blazed. Julia kindled. Out of the night she burnt like a dead white star. Julia opened her arms. Julia kissed her on the lips. Julia possessed it.

The repetition here lies mostly within the structure and the use of sounds.[17] With only one exception each sentence offers a slight modification of the preceding one. The short, simple sentences produce a

quick, breathy rhythm for the reader, while Lawrence tries for the same effect with one very long sentence slowed by numerous commas and sibilants. The heavy-handed water imagery in the Lawrence passage--"surge," "surging" (used twice), "eddies," and "surge of water" are all used in a single sentence--and the tendency towards purple prose--"in pained, poignant eddies she drew him nearer"--are much more apt to make us laugh at the Lawrence passage than at the Woolf. He does produce something of an orgasmic rhythm in the language--

> she drew him nearer, she let him come further, his lips came and surging, surging, soft, oh soft, yet oh, like the powerful surge of water--

(and it comes complete with ejaculation in that final surge!). The deliberateness with which the orgasmic effect is achieved mitigates some of its effectiveness. Lawrence has neither the splendid artifice of Joyce's passage--"darker than the swoon of sin, softer than sound or odour"--nor the propulsive spontaneity of the Woolf passage which captures, in its simplicity, the emotional excitement of the moment. The actual use of the language differs in the passages but then so does what is actually being expressed. Lawrence and Joyce are trying to capture the whole sexual act in a kiss; Woolf is interested in the tension and excitement of sexual feelings, not intercourse <u>per se</u>.

In the passages cited, Woolf's sentences suggest emotional intensity. The most physical of Woolf's kisses, Richard's and Rachel's, is also the least positive. Unwanted, it sends "black waves" over Rachel. The other Woolf kisses have a strong emotional clarity and joyousness which parallel the metaphorical images of diamonds and stars. Joyce combines sensations of the body with those of the mind--the pressure is

both physical and mental, after all--with the result that the senses are intermingled with the emotions. In Lawrence, however, there is very little emotion involved; his images are all intensely physical; even the metaphors refer more to the body than to the feelings or senses. The example from The Rainbow shows the pattern Lawrence sets. It begins with a probing kiss, increasingly urgent, followed by penetration and ejaculation. It is a physical rhythm of blood and heart pounding with increased strength to climax. Lawrence writes about physical sex, about only one aspect of what is going on between two people.

If we look at other women writers whom Woolf included or excluded from the tradition of the women's sentence, we will find that Austen in particular and Emily Brontë, to a lesser degree, do write with a sentence that is elastic in the manner in which we have defined the term. Austen, like Woolf, makes heavy use of the dash to interject seemingly spontaneous--and often apparently extraneous--thoughts into a sentence. Her sentences share the buoyant and accommodating tone of Woolf's, producing the effect of impulsiveness in spite of the obvious care of their design:

> [s]he looked back; she compared the two--compared them, as they had always stood in her estimation, from the time of the latter's becoming known to her--and as they must at any time have been compared by her, had it--oh! had it, by any blessed felicity--occurred to her to institute the comparison.
>
> Jane Austen, Emma (New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1969), pp. 434-435.

This is an expansive sentence. It speaks with a casual authority which does not depend on fixedness or rigidity, but rather upon lightness and wit. The rhetorical structure is relaxed and there is a lack of assertiveness about it. It is indeed without that "strong male thrust"[18] which Anthony Burgess--in a moment of more than usually blatant

phallocentricism--complained that Austen lacked. In spite of her lack of assertiveness, Austen's books do not lack unity or significance of design. She habitually uses irony to modify the authoritarian tone of generalizations, but in doing so she does not sacrifice her own authority; it remains in the deftness with which plots and characters are drawn, and in the sophistication of her comic spirit.

George Eliot also uses irony but her touch is not as relaxed as Austen's or Woolf's and her books are more inclined to be ponderous and judgmental, and her writing less elastic. Austen and Woolf use irony like a rapier--a light thrust and a quick withdrawal--with the result that the irony is light and witty; with Eliot it seems to become a bludgeon at times. Eliot seems to want to create the effect of buoyancy and expansiveness in her prose, but she often mistakes length for the appearance of flexibility and the result can be most unpleasant:

> [e]ven in her most uneasy moments--even when she had been agitated by Mrs Cadwallader's painfully graphic report of gossip--her effort, nay, her strongest impulsive prompting, had been towards the vindication of Will from any sullying surmises; and when, in her meeting with him afterwards, she had at first interpreted his words as a probable allusion to a feeling towards Mrs Lydgate which he was determined to cut himself off from indulging, she had had a quick, sad, excusing vision of the charm there might be in his constant opportunities of companionship with that fair creature, who most likely shared his other tastes as she evidently did his delight in music.
>
> George Eliot, Middlemarch (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 828.

Surely this is what Woolf had in mind when she referred to Eliot's "atrocities" with the male sentence. The Woolf or Austen dashes are here, as are the little interruptions or changes of direction that indicate that Eliot is attempting to create a sense of the ongoing quality and the unpredictability of thought, but the overall effect is rigid and wooden.

The phrasing is ponderous and heavy--"she had at first interpreted his words as a probable allusion to a feeling towards Mrs Lydgate"--and counters the feeling of spontaneity that the various interjections are meant to engender. (It appears that Eliot would also have us believe that women--or at any rate, other women--think in a most circuitous fashion which is, I think, disproved by Hiatt's findings as well as by the samples from Woolf and others.) Nor does Eliot use the devices of parallelism and repetition which Woolf uses to give rhythm and propulsion to long and complex sentences, devices which are, if Hiatt's study is accurate, employed more frequently by women than by men.

The problem with adopting Woolf's criteria, with adopting any criteria really, is that it becomes a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. A great many women writers would have to be rejected as being outside the female tradition if we demand elasticity in their prose. Of course, there are many who have put themselves outside the tradition by their own doings, by adopting a male voice, as Willa Cather does when she creates a fictional male author for her work My Antonia, or by adopting a male conception of a female voice, as Mrs. Humphrey Ward does when she offers the "heart of an Englishwoman"[19] along with her staunch defenses of traditional, patriarchal family life. Still, as readers we do judge the authenticity of the voice; we automatically evaluate the performance when, for example, we read a book with a first person female narrator and a male author. For this reason I find it interesting that in one of the great female interior monologues of the modern period, Joyce's "Penelope," the notion of the elastic, spontaneously expansive female sentences is taken to the extreme. Molly's entire soliloquy, which takes up some forty-odd pages of text, is rendered in only eight sentences. Perhaps

Joyce too felt that the key to the female style lay in this accommodating elasticity.

As a woman reader, I also consciously evaluate whether or not I feel a woman writer is, in Woolf's words, "true to the psychology of her sex." I think that what Woolf means here is that a woman writer who is true to the psychology of her sex has a female authority, not a male, or a male-defined voice. Essentially she must write as a woman, not in literary drag, nor in a costume concocted by a male dresser. Obviously this notion is an intuitive, highly subjective consideration, but nonetheless I find it possible to conclude that writers like Colette, Virginia Woolf, and Katherine Mansfield please me more than George Eliot, Willa Cather, or Dorothy Richardson. My criticism of the second group revolves around the notion of authority. I feel that women writers untrue to the psychology of their sex are untrue because they have adopted a male authority. Cather does it by frequently having male narrators and Richardson by obscuring the female character's emotional and physical self (Miriam conceives a child in Pilgrimage, but only the most astute reader can decipher the passage).

Obviously what this means is that I feel they have adopted a male manner; they have allowed their work to be corrupted by the male tradition which deprives them of the authority of their own insights. As a result they lack the authority that convinces us, as readers, of the authenticity of their narrative voice. Instead their works often appear ill-formed, indecisive, and imitative.

Woolf modelled the ideal female sentence on her own sentence and on Austen's, not on Richardson whom she eventually rejected. Her ideal was a sentence that incorporated control and spontaneity, order and

fragmentation, and, at this early stage of her work, male and female. If the "flying helter-skelter resolves itself by degrees into a perceptible whole" then "unity" and "significance, or design"[20] can be achieved. Above all else it is an ideal that celebrates balance as do Woolf's own gracefully designed sentences. Hiatt's book, The Way Women Write, also emphasizes women's use of balance in rhetorical devices, adverbs, and constructions.[21] Hiatt concludes that women's obsession with balance is an aspect of their aiming to please, or at least not to offend, and dismisses it as "middle of the road."[22] But perhaps the point here is whether or not the middle is a bad place to be (assuming that men and women are even on the same road!). For Woolf there was a grace, an order, a significant form, if you will, to balanced and elegant sentences; this does not necessarily reflect the concerns of other writers. If she saw this balance to be peculiarly female--and although she began by calling it androgynous, I believe, as I hope to prove later, that she later abandoned that notion in favour of celebrating the more specifically female--then it was because she wished it to be so. She saw her own style--a direct descendent of Austen's--as the one best suited to the female mode. If the female sentence exists it would be, as we have seen, balanced yet spontaneous and elastic, "capable of suspending the frailest particles." It would be as we find it in Woolf.

To attempt to define is automatically to confine and reject. Woolf acknowledged this when she recorded her final response to Richardson in her diary, "[i]f she's good then I'm not."[23] To discuss those included is to reinscribe the exclusions, as Mary Jacobus notes:

> "a possible operation of the feminine in language" is always elsewhere, not yet, not here, unless it simply reinscribes the exclusions, confines, and irregularities. . . .[24]

But Jacobus's view remains pessimistic; it speaks of female silence within male language. Showalter's conclusions are more promising:

> the land promised to us is not the serenely undifferentiated universality of texts but the tumultuous and intriguing wilderness of difference itself.[25]

Differences of structure and grammatical usage are less apt to be culturally determined than differences of tone or vocabulary. Female style will be found in the rhythms and patterns of the prose, not merely in the content. Without defining new parameters we can still acknowledge that the differences do exist.

Works like Mary Hiatt's computer-assisted study will help us to identify some of those differences more accurately. As Hiatt herself notes in the conclusion to "The Sexology of Style":

> [t]he findings do suggest that there may be ways in which the writing of men differs from the writing of women. That is, there may be "masculine" and "feminine" styles.
>
> But such styles probably will not coincide with the current stereotyped and traditional notions of how men and women write, for these notions are historically embedded in literary criticism and deeply involved with women's roles. Therefore it is not at all unlikely that . . . we will find differences which depart from a traditional, nonobjective view.[26]

It is important to recognize and remember that, however imprecise our means of pinpointing or discussing them are, the differences remain. They are necessary for us to understand the similarities, the moments of shared voice, the influences, and the allusions. It is difference that defines for us many texts rather than one text, just as it is difference that defines male and female culturally, socially, and physically. It

seems inconceivable that two peoples as dissimilar as the human sexes should speak with the same voice; there is a female style and it will become more precise as women learn to accept and appreciate their own voice.

It was, on the whole, this ideal of a female style that fascinated Woolf. She wrote about the female sentence in a rather roundabout fashion, touching on desired traits or characteristics, but never actually defining her terms. I can do no more than expand on her considerations; the precise definitions, if indeed they are possible, remain as elusive as ever. What we do have access to, however, is her use of the language itself and in her choice of metaphors Woolf is, I believe, specifically female and "true to the psychology of her sex." In her extensive use of figurative language she explores the female side of human sexuality not just in terms of the sexual act itself, but also in terms of the importance to women of the ideas of chastity, integrity, and individuality. Her metaphors speak of female bodies, female fears, failures, and triumphs, female minds and female desires. Whether or not she uses a "female sentence," Woolf speaks eloquently, if occasionally a bit elusively, of female concerns.

CHAPTER III

METAPHOR AND THE EXPLORATION OF FEMALE SEXUALITY

It is the metaphor, that non-literal, highly figurative device of the language, that gives much of the breadth of expression to English prose. Metaphors surprise and delight the reader; they speak without didacticism. They expose a nimble mind, a dexterous wit, an imaginative eye. But they also allow the writer true discretion. Figurative language demands the co-conspiracy of author and reader, the maker and the appreciator of metaphor. The writer issues a concealed invitation to the reader and then the reader expends a special effort to accept the information contained in the metaphor. The appreciator of a metaphor is, then, responsible for two things: "he must realize that the expression is a metaphor and he must figure out the point of the expression."[1] Thus the relationship of the maker to the appreciator is one of community and the transaction between author and reader, which requires the expenditure of effort on both sides, places some of the burden of knowing onto the reader. If a writer conceals his discussion of some topic in figurative language, as Woolf conceals her discussion of female sexuality, and the reader correctly interprets the metaphors, then the reader can hardly claim to be corrupted or surprised by the author. The restrictive rules of female deportment--perceived or actual--have made metaphor even more important for the erotic expression of female novelists than for their male counterparts.

For Virginia Woolf those restrictive rules were real and present

obstacles as her comments in "Professions for Women" reveal:

> The image that comes to my mind when I think of this girl is the image of a fisherman lying sunk in dreams on the verge of a deep lake with a rod held out over the water. She was letting her imagination sweep unchecked round every rock and cranny of the world that lies submerged in the depths of our unconscious being. . . . The line raced through the girl's fingers. Her imagination had rushed away. . . . And then there was a smash. There was an explosion. There was form and confusion. The imagination had dashed itself against something hard. The girl was roused from her dream. . . . She had thought of something, something about the body, about the passions which it was unfitting for her as a woman to say. . . . The consciousness of what men will say of a woman who speaks the truth about her passions had roused her from her artist's state of unconsciousness. She could write no more.[2]

The hard object which the line hits is, of course, the censorship, both external and internal, of the woman's sexual consciousness. Such censorship was, in Woolf's time, an inescapable social convention. Figurative language provided the means through which Woolf could circumvent that hard, submerged object.

Although the sexual metaphors Woolf employs are many and various, they can be broadly grouped into three main categories. There are solid objects, not obstacles this time so much as anchors, which enable the women who identify with them to define and grasp some comparatively "solid" aspect of self. The possession of or identification with these objects is associated in Woolf's writings with the notion of sexual integrity. Secondly, there are the landscapes which suggest freedom and flying when they are open, aggressive sexuality when they are like jungles, and hidden depths (and terrors) when the image is of the sea rather than solid land. Thirdly, there is the loose and very complicated category of flying things--often birds, but also butterflies, moths and other insects. In particular, women are crippled insects,

moths dashing themselves into lights, wet and helpless flies, unopened chrysalids, or butterflies with shrivelled wings. These women have all the fragility of the creatures with whom they are linked but only seldom do they possess the comparable freedoms.

These metaphors are female in the sense that their reference points are the bodies and sensations of women.[3] In various ways, in language ranging from the erotic to the mystical, the metaphors communicate something about the sexual lives of Woolf's female characters. Although they do not necessarily reveal new information about female sexuality, these metaphors do provide an unexpected look at the known. We speak of the soul or the psyche forming a solid core to the being but we do not necessarily relate that sensation to a clutched coin or book. Open landscapes do have an intensity about them but we may not identify that intensity as the result of the freedom that a feeling of spaciousness produces. And though we may feel that a sharp rebuke or an unwanted demand clips or shrivels our wings, we usually do not express our dismay in such a figurative manner. Woolf's clever metaphors detour around that hard obstacle in the water and free her to plumb the depths of the unconscious and to express the passions and anxieties of women as easily as she discusses the manners of an Edwardian drawing room. The pleasure of Woolf's metaphors is that they are both lure and divertissement.

The solid objects that signify integrity for the women in Woolf's novels are the direct opposite of the obstacle in the water that the novelist in "Professions for Women" must confront. The successful women in her novels, successful in the sense that they cope adequately with the realities of their lives, have some command over the objects in their lives. In contrast, the unsuccessful women, like Rhoda in The

Waves, or Peggy Pargiter, or Rachel Vinrace, are unable to grasp any solid aspect of life. Reality for them is protean and they cannot hold on long enough to triumph over its transformations. The women who fail also tend to lack sexual integrity. Woolf argues very persuasively in Three Guineas that women must preserve chastity of body and mind by staying free of "unreal loyalties" (TG., p. 93) to family, church, state, or profession. She desires a sort of cerebral virginity uninvaded by patriarchy as it is represented by those male-dominated institutions of state, church, law and education which she so eloquently undercuts in Three Guineas. Women must remain "outsiders" (TG., p. 122) to sustain this chastity. The characters who succeed in remaining outside (and they do so while being mothers, lovers, and wives) are complete in themselves rather than dependent on the men in their lives for a vicarious totality. For Woolf it is as if the sense of an indivisible and immutable self which all of these women possess is the necessary and sufficient condition of sexual integrity which precedes their ability to connect with others --either men or women. Most of these women are associated with an object, either real or imaginary, that functions as the private symbol of their integrity. Clarissa Dalloway has the diamond of self, Mrs. Ramsay the third stroke of the lighthouse (not in itself solid, but treated by Mrs. Ramsay as though it were), Orlando the oak tree, Eleanor Pargiter the coins clutched in her hand during the party, Jinny her scarf, and Susan the "hard object" at the core of her self.

The Years will be a dominant source for my discussion of Woolf's use of metaphor because the now published early draft, The Pargiters, with its alternating chapters of fiction and essay commentary, clearly shows just how much Woolf intended the book to be about the "sexual life of

women."[4] Before I look at how the women in the novels relate to solid objects let me take one example from Woolf's short story "The Introduction"[5] where the relationship between the character Lily Everit and the object, an essay on the character of Dean Swift, is made explicitly one of self-definition. Lily is a shy young woman at one of Clarissa Dalloway's parties who, upon seeing her hostess approach, feels that she

> had two minutes respite there in which to hug to herself, as a drowning man might hug a spar in the sea, her essay on the character of Dean Swift. (MDP., p. 37)

The essay, which received three stars from her Professor, is her anchor and her measure of self-worth. It is what allows her to feel that the sister and the maid who fuss over her before she leaves for the party are simply arranging the surface while "beneath lay untouched like a lump of glowing metal--her essay" (MDP., p. 37). She divides life into "rock and wave" (the solid and the fluid), but unfortunately she is not prepared for the vicious rocks the waves dash her against. She must confront men at the party and her solid object is not rock enough to defend her against their massive solidity. She feels the stars on her paper "yielding to the pressure of unquestionable might. . . . [w]hat had she to oppose to this massive masculine achievement?" (MDP., p. 40). Against such opposition all solidity escapes her and the

> hard lump (her essay . . .) wobbled began wilting, she could not keep hold of it, and all her being (no longer sharp as a diamond cleaving the heart of life asunder) turned to a mist of alarm, apprehension, and defense, as she stood at bay in her corner. (MDP., p. 38)

Lily Everit, like Rhoda in The Waves, is defeated by the fact that she cannot prevent the solid from becoming fluid and escaping her grasp.

Although Lily is obviously very intelligent, she has no ego, no solid centre with which to defend herself. The three stars given to her by a male professor have a "terrible lustre" by the story's end; they are "troubled and bloodstained" (MDP., p. 43). Without a solid centre she is reduced to an insect (as I shall discuss later) and crushed.

In the novels, the relationships between women and solid objects, though perhaps more subtly expressed than in "An Introduction," are nonetheless consistent with the story. Women who can find solidity in the world around them also possess a strong and healthy ego; those who cannot, do not.

The first example of the solid object as focus for the self in The Years belongs not to the central figure of Eleanor but to her sister Delia. At her mother's funeral Delia is unable to feel until "three pebbles fell on the hard shiny surface" of the coffin and at that moment

> she was possessed by a sense of something everlasting; of life mixing with death, of death becoming life. For as she looked she heard the sparrow's chirp quicker and quicker; she heard wheels in the distance sound louder and louder; life came closer and closer. . . . (Y., p. 68, ellipsis Woolf's)

Unfortunately for Delia, the minister's platitudes disrupt her reveries and she notes angrily that "he had spoilt her moment of understanding" (Y., p. 68). Consistently in this novel reveries interrupted are not recaptured; Delia does not get another moment of understanding but goes on to marry a perversion of her fantasy man and raise children that Woolf never bothers to name.

Throughout the novel it is Eleanor who displays the greatest affinity for solid objects. She is the Pargiter sister who has the most clearly defined sense of self. Repeatedly in the book she ponders the

'fate of the walrus-shaped brush Martin had given their mother, pausing to reflect at one point that "[t]hat solid object might survive them all" (Y., p. 71). It does not, of course, and at the end Eleanor survives while the brush has disappeared from the writing desk.[6] The solid objects which do survive, in spite of being dropped down steps and into sofas, are the coins which Eleanor clutches throughout the final sequence of the novel, Delia's party.

At Delia's party, confronted by the generations that have followed her, Eleanor begins to worry about the focus of her life:

> My life, she said to herself . . . I haven't got one, she thought. Oughtn't a life to be something you could handle and produce?--a life of seventy odd years. But I've only the present moment, she thought. (Y., pp. 279-280)

At this point, however, the coins which she has been clutching, her "share" of the fare for the cab she rode in with Peggy, make their presence felt and she begins to see herself in a more positive light:

> She clenched her hands and felt the hard little coins she was holding. Perhaps there's 'I' at the middle of it, she thought; a knot; a centre; and again she saw herself sitting at her table drawing on the blotting-paper, digging little holes from which spokes radiated. Out and out they went; thing followed thing, scene obliterated scene. (Y., p. 280)

Although Eleanor feels that she cannot communicate her discovery, "no, she thought, I can't find words; I can't tell anybody" (Y., p. 280), she has found the "I" at the centre of her being. Later at the party, when her mind slips during her contemplation of the patterns of life, she wishes that she could give her thought to Nicholas that he might "carry it out into the open unbroken; to make it whole, beautiful, entire" (Y., p. 282). This quest for unity is a central function of the radiant self possessed by the women in Woolf's novels who succeed in life. The

spokes lead out from the centre but they also draw back in towards the axle. This paradox of radiance and containment, which also manifests itself in the contrasts of unity and dispersion or fecundity and integrity, is consistently present in almost all of Woolf's fictional writing. We see it in the radiant sun whose heat repels (it is burning hot) and attracts (in its life-giving aspect) in the novel Mrs. Dalloway through to the simultaneous "scattering and foraging" of Miss La Trobe in Between the Acts.

Eleanor's coins radiate like the circles and spokes she remembers drawing on the blotting paper at the meeting she attended in the same room years ago. In The Years coins are also associated with another radiant object, the moon, and the connection, through the chastity traditionally associated with the moon, adds integrity to the coins which are more frequently associated with corruption. "The moon," the narrator notes, "shone like a silver coin, perfectly polished, very sharp and hard" (Y., p. 107). The moon is also a "chaste sixpence" in Three Guineas as Herbert Marder points out in his discussion of the symbolism of coins in Virginia Woolf.[7] It is important that coins are given integrity in the novel because they represent for Woolf the possibility of freedom for women. In Three Guineas the possession of coins of their own is the one way for women to free themselves of the unreal loyalties that constantly threaten integrity. It is only with an income and a room of her own, after all, that a woman can sustain her mental chastity.

Eleanor is, in fact, as solid as the coins in more ways than she realizes. There is indeed a knot, a centre, a core around which the spokes radiate and that core is the "I" that resists invasion. Eleanor's solid centre can and does survive spiritual assaults. Twice in the novel

she feels herself stabbed but the healthy ego deflects any sense of wound. The first time is when Sara tells her that Nicholas is a homosexual and the second time is when Peggy remarks that the statue of Edith Cavell[8] looks like an ad for sanitary napkins. The knife in both cases represents sexual knowledge (and the repressive forces of the super-ego) but Eleanor is up to the attack. At Sara's comment, "a sharp shiver of repugnance passed over Eleanor's skin as if a knife had sliced it. Then she realized that it had touched nothing of importance" (Y., p. 228). In response to Peggy's statement, "[a] knife seemed to slice her skin, leaving a ripple of unpleasant sensation; but what was solid in her body it did not touch" (Y., p. 257). The healthy ego is a strong self-defense.

Clarissa Dalloway's metaphorical diamond of self is an aspect of the same paradox as Eleanor's spoked blot or silver coins. The diamond is radiant but also hard and imperishable--the light can only emanate (produce the spokes) for as long as the hard core remains. Clarissa recognizes the paradox herself and sees in the diamond both the ability to give, the radiance, and the material solidity, and thus stability, of the gem itself. That duality comforts her and allows her to present a stable self not eroded by the demands of nurturing in the roles of wife, mother, and hostess.

Musing on the character of her face in the mirror Clarissa feels:

> that was her self when some effort, some call on her to be herself, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point, a radiancy. . . . (MD., p. 55)

The diamond, which is the hardest and purest of natural substances, is

also chaste. It is only one of many images of chastity associated with Clarissa in the text. The diamond is also connected with Sally Seton's kiss which Clarissa sees as, "a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up" (MD., p. 52-53). For Clarissa the most memorable aspect of her relationship with Sally was "the purity, the integrity, of her feeling" (MD., p. 50).

The radiant diamond is a defense against the other image of self that confronts Clarissa, the "shrivelled, aged, breastless" (MD., p. 45) woman who finds herself excluded from Lady Bruton's lunch party. But the diamond is also ice, sterile and frigid. By the novel's end it has been replaced by that other great source of radiant light, warm rather than cool, the sun. The sun symbolizes the entire self in the novel. The radiant spokes include pain and death as well as life and the passions and terrors of sexuality. Clarissa's refrain "Fear no more the heat of the sun" (MD., p. 283) is a cry for the acceptance of the whole self in all its diversity. At her party Clarissa is indeed the "meeting-point" or "radiancy" she had envisioned (MD., p. 55), but it is no longer a sterile radiance. The references to virginity are less dense as the novel progresses. In the end, through the agency of Septimus' suicide, a surrogate for her own, she is able to confront not only death but also life:

> [s]he felt somehow very like him--the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. . . . He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back. She must assemble. (MD., pp. 283-84)

Virginia Woolf portrays women as fecund not in their ability to bear children, but in their ability to connect or assemble. The luminous central selves attract with their light as well as radiating it. Thus it

is Clarissa's ability to assemble, not her ability to bear Elizabeth, that is celebrated at the novel's end. Like Helen Ambrose, Mrs. Ramsay, or Miss La Trobe, Clarissa is a gatherer of "orts and fragments" (BA., p. 140). Mrs. Ramsay may be the most conventional mother figure of the novels, but her moments of triumphant connection do not include the children--at least not physically. The children are present, symbolically, at the dinner party in the eight radiant candles that run the length of the table. Like the candles Mrs. Ramsay's internal radiance provides a focus not only for her self but for the friends and family that surround her. Like the sun, then, these women are fecund because of the life-giving warmth of their radiance.

This paradox of radiance and attraction that the metaphors explore is most clearly revealed in the two images associated with Mrs. Ramsay. On the one hand she is represented by the constant and illuminating stroke of the lighthouse, on the other by a wedge-shaped core of darkness. The lighthouse beam is her nurturing, life-giving aspect while the immutable core of darkness is her private, uninvaded self. Only the existence of the latter allows her to give so freely of her warmth.

Like Eleanor Pargiter's coin, or Clarissa Dalloway's diamond, Mrs. Ramsay's third stroke of the lighthouse is a luminous metaphor of self. The most maternal of the mother-women in Woolf's novels, Mrs. Ramsay still feels

> a relief when [the children] went to bed. For now she need not think about anybody. She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of--to think; well not even to think. To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal; evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a

> wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others. (TTL., p. 60)

At this point in her reverie Mrs. Ramsay has just put her youngest child to bed and has sat down, finally alone, to knit. As she continues to think about "this core of darkness" her eye is caught by the beam of the lighthouse and the third stroke balances the "triangular purple shape" (TTL., p. 52) as the other aspect of her self,

> pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke . . . this thing, the long steady stroke, was her stroke. (TTL., p. 61)

Mrs. Ramsay is capable of absorbing things into her being--or rather of allowing her being to be absorbed into things. She "became the thing she looked at" (TTL., p. 61).

As her identification with the lighthouse beam increases, Mrs. Ramsay becomes entranced by its rhythm:

> [s]he saw the light again . . . she looked at the steady light, the pitiless, the remorseless, which was so much her, yet so little her . . . but for all that she thought, watching it with fascination, hypnotized, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, she had known happiness, exquisite happiness . . . and the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough! (TTL., pp. 62-63)

It is a very mystical moment for Woolf's work, suggesting a deep spiritual connection between the woman and the light. Mr. Ramsay, looking at her in her reverie, feels her to be "distant" (TTL., p. 63) and dares not approach her, an image which carries on the notion of the moment as a holy one. The tension is broken by Mrs. Ramsay herself. Having achieved the moment, and having discovered that which is immutable and eternal in her self, she willingly gets up and goes to her husband.

Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party begins in "scraps and fragments" (TTL., p. 85). Once the candles are lit, however, the "entire" (TTL., p. 90) table is illuminated and the diners "were brought nearer by the candle light, and composed . . . into a party round a table" (TTL., p. 90). Mrs. Ramsay, the candles, the bowl of fruits, and the boeuf en daube (that pot full of savoury meats and wine), are all unifying aspects of the dinner. But it is Mrs. Ramsay alone who is "irresistible" (TTL., p. 94), who sits guarding the food and the conversation, carefully serving the choicest bits and steering the talk away from confrontation. Slowly the dinner resolves itself into another triumph for Mrs. Ramsay--"a ruby" (TTL., p. 97)--that aspect of the moment which partakes of eternity and which is "immune from change, and shines out" (TTL., p. 97). Like Clarissa's diamond, Mrs. Ramsay's ruby is brilliant, focal, and immutable; but whereas the diamond is chaste and clear the ruby is a blood-red gemstone symbolic of Mrs. Ramsay's fuller participation in life. Five novels later, in The Years, Woolf will give us Kitty Lasswade, whose spiritual self is connected to the moors and who finds herself one day in the hollow of an emerald.

In the last section of To the Lighthouse Lily Briscoe begins to assimilate the images that were associated with Mrs. Ramsay, who rather overshadowed Lily in the first section. As we have already noted, the lighthouse beam is connected with Mrs. Ramsay, but so is the image of a fountain--at least in James' imagination--:

> Mrs Ramsay . . . seemed to raise herself with an effort, and at once to pour erect into the air a rain of energy, a column of spray, looking at the same time animated and alive as if all her energies were being fused into force, burning and illuminating . . . and into this delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life, the fatal sterility of the male plunged itself. (TTL., p. 38)

Although the fountain is the opposite of a solid object it is an aspect of the radiant or dispersing side of the paradox. The fecundity of the fountain is self-contained and regenerative. In many ways it is an image more apt in a discussion of the artist, Lily Briscoe, than of the mother, Mrs. Ramsay, for the latter's powers of creation are hardly reliant upon solo efforts whatever James thinks of male "sterility."

In the final section of the novel, as Lily is able to face her grief for Mrs. Ramsay, she begins to absorb the metaphors associated with the older woman. First she begins to paint with the rhythm of the light-house beam:

> [w]ith a curious physical sensation, as if she were urged forward and at the same time must hold herself back, she made her first quick decisive stroke. The brush descended. It flickered brown over the white canvas; it left a running mark. A second time she did it--a third time. And so pausing and so flickering, she attained a dancing rhythmical movement, as if the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the strokes another, and all were related. (TTL., p. 148)

The painting is Lily Briscoe's act of "delicious fecundity" and its association with Mrs. Ramsay's fountain is soon made explicit:

> her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and sayings, and memories and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modelled it with greens and blues. (TTL., p. 149)

At the novel's end Lily has discovered her own integrity. At the end of section three, no longer afraid that she is without life because she is unmarried, nor afraid that she is "so little, so virginal" (TTL., p. 49), Lily is able to offer Mr. Ramsay what he needs without compromising herself.

Looking at her painting, Lily feels that "she could not achieve that razor edge of balance between two opposite forces; Mr Ramsay and the picture; which was necessary" (TTL., p. 178). In the novel's final moment

she finds that balance in the single line she draws in the centre of the canvas before laying down her brush. The stroke is Mrs. Ramsay, the long, slow stroke of the lighthouse. Above all it is Mrs. Ramsay alone: the stroke replaces the dark wedge of the first painting that had represented the maternal Mrs. Ramsay; the triangle was the shadow of mother and son. The single line is the united woman sufficient in her aloneness--Lily Briscoe's recognition of her own integrity as much as her recognition of Mrs. Ramsay's.

Just as the women who succeed in Woolf's novels are full of sexual integrity and a sense of the wholeness of the self, the women who fail are incapable of establishing a concrete identity for themselves. Rachel Vinrace, Peggy Pargiter, and Rhoda all suffer from this inability to define themselves against something solid.

Helen Ambrose worries that Rachel is too naive for her own good. Educated by maiden Aunts in London, the girl has reached the age of twenty-four with no knowledge or understanding of her own sexuality. In her conversation with Helen after Richard Dalloway's kiss, Rachel stammers, "'I can be m-m-myself'" (VO., p. 81), but it is a statement of tentative search rather than of discovery. Unfortunately for Rachel that search is never concluded. Almost all her attempts to pin herself down, to find something graspable to cling to, are interrupted, more often than not by men. Having left the dance, angry at St. John Hirst, Rachel finds herself in the garden confronting the trees. She sees herself--still in a fantastical light--as a Persian princess surrounded by women, but her reverie is cut short by Terence's entrance. Later, when she feels comfortable with him, he reminds her that she is a woman, destroying her feeling of "freedom" and making her feel "self-conscious" and "under

observation" (VO., pp. 216-17).

Rachel's tragedy is that she "connects" with Terence too soon; she loses herself in him by loving him before she has discovered her own being. When Rachel and Terence fight for "mastery" he wins by throwing her to the floor where she "lay gasping, and crying for mercy" (VO., p. 305). When she gets up, her dress is torn across suggesting a sexual rending as well. But Rachel, who is still dependent on Terence, St. John and Helen for her education and her sense of self, is not ready for such an encounter. Rachel dies, on the metaphorical level, because she allows herself to become one with Terence in a way that Helen would not allow herself to become one with Ridley nor Clarissa with Richard. She surrenders, in effect, her own oneness. Interestingly enough one of the symptoms of her illness is the sense of disconnectedness. Rachel feels in her delirium that her flesh no longer belongs to her--she has literally lost her self.

In fact her perceptions of the reality around her are as fluid in her delirium as they were in the jungle, where her inability to grasp the concreteness of things is clearly related to sexual anxiety. Rachel sees things as though she were under water; images are unclear and distorted by refraction. This relates to her association with the mermaid but the mermaid is, after all, tragically unfit for life on land. In the famous fairytale the mermaid dies for the love of a mortal, unable to adapt and unwilling to surrender her love. Rachel's other-worldly status is confirmed by Terence's reaction to her death. The reality of it confronts him only when he runs into the solid objects of the everyday world and realizes that "here was a world in which he would never see Rachel again" (VO., p. 361).

More complex than Rachel Vinrace, Peggy Pargiter has also compromised herself. She lacks the "chastity" of mind that Woolf argues is necessary to women in Three Guineas. Although it is never quite made clear, it seems to be her job that has compromised her. Woolf implies that Peggy has paid too high a price for the honour of being a doctor at a time when the profession had just opened its doors, reluctantly, to women. Peggy sees her own fingernails as a symbol of that indelicate balance:

> [e]fficient, shell-like, polished but not painted, they're a compromise, she thought, looking at her finger-nails, between science and . . . . (Y., p. 250; the ellipses are Woolf's)

The fingernails are neither thoroughly professional (they are polished), nor thoroughly feminine (they are not painted). Whatever the external pressures may or may not be, Peggy cannot find in herself the strength with which to bridge the gap between the woman and the job. Although for others the nails might easily signify her ability to be both woman and doctor, for Peggy, who has no solidity to rely upon, they only display her inadequacy on both counts. Because she has nothing with which to sustain herself against the demands of two separate societies, she can only see the negative possibility.

While Eleanor confronts life, Peggy studiously avoids it. Her compromises lead her to wish for the safety of the past and she constantly demands stories of that "safe; so unreal" time from her aunt (Y., p. 254). Presumably in the past, when women were safely barred from the professions, there was only one society to cope with and Peggy would not have felt the conflicting pulls of her own day. At the party she is an observer only. She is unable to connect with anyone. Her Uncle Patrick misunderstands

her, the young man darts off at her mention of "I," and she estranges her brother, North, when she wants most desperately to connect with him. Unfortunately we have no reason to believe that she is any more successful in her attempts to connect within her other world, her profession.

Peggy is one of the most poignant female characters in Woolf's novels because we want so much for her to succeed. She is talented and well educated and a truly professional woman. She does not fail through ignorance like Rachel nor is she traumatically without self like Rhoda. We respond with sympathy and disappointment towards Peggy because she comes so close but still fails. For one thing she is aware of what the problem is: "I'm the exception; hard; cold; in a groove already; merely a doctor" (Y., p. 270). But while she has her moment of vision, she bumbles her attempt to express it:

> [s]he stopped. There was the vision still, but she had not grasped it. She had broken off only a little fragment of what she meant to say, and she had made her brother angry. Yet there it hung before her, the thing she had seen, the thing she had not said. (Y., p. 298)

Peggy glimpses the solidity and entirety of the self but it fractures before her eyes. Hers is the classic torture of Tantalus, able always to glimpse that for which he hungers but unable to grasp it. She has only her job to define herself against and the result is that she is without a true self. She has allowed herself to absorb the stereotypes of the doctor because down to the tips of her compromised fingernails she has no defined sense of self with which she might fend off the assumptions about women in the professions. A professional woman stifled by unreal loyalties and a self-censoring mind, Peggy is far removed from the ideal "outsider" Woolf proposed in Three Guineas (pp. 90-95). In fact, Peggy

is very much an insider, standing at the window wishing herself outside, but unable to even open the window without her father's help.

In spite of her compromises Peggy will no doubt survive as long as the vision continues to tantalize her. The assumptions made about the professional woman do give her a general self to slip into on social occasions. Rhoda, in The Waves, is not so lucky. She struggles throughout the book to grasp some solid object and failing flings herself into a rush of air. From the novel's outset Rhoda is unable to grasp the solidity of the world around her. She is isolated, the one pale petal ship that sails on alone, the creature outside the entire world. As a child she tries to become somebody by emulating Jinny or Susan. Knowing mimicry to be futile, she abandons such efforts and tries instead to connect herself, by touch, to something solid:

> I put off my hopeless desire to be Susan, to be Jinny. But I will stretch my toes so that they touch the rail at the end of the bed; I will assure myself, touching the rail, of something hard. Now I cannot sink; cannot altogether fall through the thin sheet now. Now I spread my body on this frail mattress and hang suspended. I am above the earth now. I am no longer upright, to be knocked against and damaged. (W., p. 18)

But the objects with which Rhoda tries to connect will not remain solid; instead they bend and elongate under her eyes and she feels herself "sink":

> [l]ook, there is the chest of drawers. Let me pull myself out of these waters. But they heap themselves on me; they sweep me between their great shoulders; I am turned; I am tumbled; I am stretched, among these long lights, these long waves, these endless paths, with people pursuing, pursuing. (W., p. 19)

Even the most solid of solid objects remains liquid in Rhoda's world.

In the second section of The Waves the three female characters confront themselves, in turn, in the mirror. Rhoda hides from the

confrontation, feeling herself to "have no face" (W., p. 29) and notes of Jinny and Susan that "[t]heir world is the real world. The things they lift are heavy" (W., p. 29). In her world things become ever more liquid, more fluid than constant, more terrifying than reassuring:

> [m]onth by month things are losing their hardness; even my body now lets the light through; my spine is soft like wax near the flame of the candle. (W., p. 31)

In contrast Jinny and Susan find themselves hardening as they age. Susan, aggressively tearing up the calendar as the days pass, thinks about being on the moors again where she will "unfold and take out whatever it is I have made here; something hard. For something has grown in me here" (W., p. 36). At the same time Jinny, lying in bed at night, feels her "body harden" under her hands (W., p. 37). Rather than confront her body Rhoda tries to immerse herself in a fantasy, her "Empress dream", but it "is not solid; it gives me no satisfaction" (W., p. 38).

Solidity is not just desirable for Rhoda; it is necessary. She thinks about a garden party where she was humiliated. She remembers her inability to cross a mud puddle:

> [i]dentity failed me. We are nothing, I said, and fell. I was blown like a feather, I was wafted down tunnels. Then very gingerly, I pushed my foot across. I laid my hand against a brick wall. I returned very painfully, drawing myself back into my body over the grey, cadaverous space of the puddle. (W., p. 43)

It is the solidity of the brick under her hand which allows Rhoda to regain her body and her identity, however fragile, for the moment. As she ages, the puddles become more frequent and less traversable. The metaphorical puddles are more difficult to cross because, as the anguish of her statement suggests, there are no brick walls beyond them:

> I cannot cross it. I hear the rush of the great grindstone within an inch of my head. Its wind roars in my face. All palpable forms of life have failed me. Unless I can stretch and touch something hard, I shall be blown down the eternal corridors forever. What, then, can I touch? What brick, what stone? and so draw myself across the enormous gulf into my body safely?[9] (W., p. 107)

In the end, when Bernard thinks of Rhoda's suicide, he thinks of it in terms of leaping into the wind. Perhaps that was Rhoda's way of flinging herself unvanquished into death, the great grindstone. But more likely Rhoda kills herself because identity always failed her, and it is her final irony that solidity should fail her in death as in life.

If there is no sense of solidity in Rhoda's life, then what are we to make of her sexual integrity? Her long and turbulent affair with Louis is a compromise because she stays with him not so much out of passion, it would appear, as out of a sense of resignation. He is her male counterpart, the other orphan in the novel. Although Louis is not technically an orphan, as Rhoda is, his denial of his Australian parents makes him a spiritual orphan. Her compromise has nothing to do with morality; the much more promiscuous Jinny is not compromised because she is true to her sexuality. Perhaps Rhoda is resigned because she feels that it is inevitable that the frail and pure white ship on which she sails--the rose petal--will succumb to either the rocks or the waves. If there is no possibility for escape, choices become futile and unnecessary. Her true sexual nature eludes her as readily as does her face in the mirror.

The second major metaphor cluster in Woolf is that of the relationship between women and landscape. It is one of the aspects of female metaphor which Ellen Moers explores in the last chapter of Literary

Women. Women in fiction retreat to places of seclusion, Moers argues, but they are not locked up snugly in fire-warmed rooms as many critics have proposed. Rather women choose to be out in the elements, in open spaces, places of "feminine stocktaking."[10] "Am I suggesting, then," Moers writes,

> that these landscapes charged with female privacy, and with emotions ranging from the erotic to the mystical, are merely literary landscapes, merely imaginary creations of women's literature? Hardly . . . [a]t the least, the brilliant landscape writing that women have devoted to open country should give pause to the next critic who wants to pronounce all literary women housebound, and the next psychologist with a theory about 'inner space.'[11]

Considering that Woolf is, in many ways, an urban writer it is surprising just how much use she does make of open country and its relationship to the women who explore it.

The moors are of an extraordinary importance to Kitty in The Years. They represent for her her roots (her mother's family came from them), freedom (including, I think, sexual freedom as she recalls the young man who kissed her in the hay), Miss Craddock's love, and her own strength. Leaving Miss Craddock's, she tries to see herself on the moors as she walks down Oxford street feeling that the countryside is weightless in comparison to the largely social burdens of the town. Perhaps the fact that Lord Lasswade owned a hunting house up on the moors influenced Kitty's choice of a husband--the house and lands figure more prominently in her reveries after her marriage than does the man. After her party, at which she deports herself like a "Grenadier" (Y., p. 197), Kitty flees to the moors on the night train. Upon arrival she feels herself immersed in green "as if she stood in the hollow of an emerald" (Y., p. 210). She is alone and glad of it. The dog's "indifference pleased her" (Y., p. 211).

She feels great pleasure in the realization that "she had a whole day to herself" (Y., p. 211), and even the integrity of the books in the library delights her: "the brown books in their long rows seemed to exist silently, with dignity, by themselves, for themselves" (Y., pp. 211-12). As she heads out on her walk she enjoys her solitude until the sight of the pale blue and white flowers "trembling on cushions of green moss" (Y., p. 212) brings back vague memories. The flowers are identical to those Miss Craddock nurtured in her window. Climbing a small hill, Kitty tests her muscles and feels the strength of her own body until, triumphant at the top,

> [s]he threw herself on the ground, and looked over the billowing land that went rising and falling, away and away, until somewhere far off it reached the sea. Uncultivated, uninhabited, existing by itself, for itself, without towns or houses it looked from this height. Dark wedges of shadow, bright breadths of light lay side by side. Then, as she watched, light moved and dark moved; light and shadow went travelling over the hills and over the valleys. A deep murmur sang in her ears--the land itself, singing to itself, a chorus, alone. She lay there listening. She was happy, completely. (Y., p. 213)

This landscape is of that peculiarly "complicated topography"[12] that characterizes the female landscape. It is also (in that it is uncultivated) virginal; it is a landscape that celebrates the entirety of oneness.

Orlando feels even more ecstatic and liberated on the moors than does Kitty Lasswade. At first frightened on one of her solitary walks, Orlando becomes more and more confident as she climbs until a "strange ecstasy came over her" (O., p. 155). She trips, flinging herself to the ground and though she is hurt she is "content." "'I have found my mate,' she murmured. 'It is the moor. I am nature's bride'" (O., p. 155). Lying on the turf she feels a part of it, as if the roots will grow about

her and absorb her. The mocking tone of this passage does not alter the fact that Orlando is consistently attracted to, and fulfilled by, the countryside. We need only think of the poem to the oak tree she carries in her bosom for so many years to realize the strong connection. It is on this occasion, after her consideration of the inadequacy of her past relationships and her feelings of self-sufficiency emerge, that she meets her perfect mate, Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine.

This is not Orlando's only moment of ecstasy on the land. Her explicit connection to the oak tree on her estate lasts through centuries and a sex-change. It is in the novel's final passage, in the year 1928, that she feels, driving alone through the park, her own complex integrity:

> [T]he whole of her darkened and settled, as when some foil whose addition makes the round and solidity of a surface is added to it, and the shallow becomes deep and the near distant; and all is contained as water is contained by the sides of a well. So she was now darkened, stilled, and become, with the addition of this Orlando, what is called, rightly or wrongly, a single self, a real self. And she fell silent. (O., p. 196)

One of the interesting things about water drops (a frequent contemplative image in Orlando and in The Waves) is that they appear infinitely expansive. One drop totally absorbs another; composite parts cannot be accurately separated out and as the pool becomes larger and deeper it becomes more reflective. At the same time any individual drop retains the prismatic qualities of a diamond. Again Woolf is consistent; the paradox of unity and dispersion is present in the image of the water drop just as it is in many of the other metaphors she employs.

The other Woolf novel where women are most explicitly connected with the land is The Waves. For the three female characters the land represents three very different things. For Rhoda it is a place to hide

and perhaps to find herself although she is never able to make good on her promise:

> I will find some dingle in a wood where I can display my assortment of curious treasures. I promise myself this. So I will not cry. (W., p. 23)

The small, protected valley is the opposite of the open and liberating vista of the moors. It is not an image without hope, however. The woman glimpsed writing in the garden is the image of the promise's fulfillment --a fulfillment that eludes Rhoda. Even in her efforts to escape Rhoda continues to enclose herself.

For Susan the land is a place of fecundity; on the moors she can unwrap the solid object in herself. The "wetfields" are her defence against the urban Jinny but they are also herself:

> I shall lie like a field bearing crops in rotation; in the summer heat will dance over me; in the winter I shall be cracked with the cold. But heat and cold will follow each other naturally without my willing or unwilling. (W., p. 88)

For Susan the relationship between herself and the land is an almost literal sharing of roles. This "natural happiness," Susan notes, "will almost content me" (W., p. 88). Hers is a landscape so rich and abundant that it is full of rot (Susan must sew the fruit into little muslin bags to protect them). She has allowed her child-bearing to become her main function just as the fertility of the landscape in which she walks is its most important characteristic.

For the urban Jinny the landscape is fantastical and rather confused, but hers is a landscape of sexual pleasure and energy:

> [h]e follows. I am pursued through the forest. All is rapt, all is nocturnal, and the parrots go screaming through the branches. All my senses stand erect. . . . Now the cool tide

> of darkness breaks its waters over me. We are out of doors. Night opens; night traversed by wandering moths; night hiding lovers roaming to adventure. I smell roses; I smell violets; I see red and blue just hidden. . . . Now let us sing our love song--Come, come, come. Now my gold signal is like a dragonfly flying taut. Jug, jug, jug, I sing like the nightingale whose melody is crowded in the too narrow passage of her throat. Now I hear crash and rending of boughs and the crack of antlers as if the beasts of the forest were all hunting, all rearing high and plunging down among the thorns, one has pierced me. One is driven deep within me. (W., p. 119)

Jinny's imaginary jungle is full of threat and delight. It is a bower of bliss wild and uninhibited, away from London and the houses "guilty with lights" (W., p. 119).

The only real jungle in Woolf, in The Voyage Out, is also full of pleasure and terror. But whereas the sexually mature Jinny is in control of her fantasies, Rachel Vinrace seems unprepared for the realities of sexual passion. Love and "coming together" cause Rachel to feel threatened; "[h]er sense of safety was shaken, as if beneath twigs and dead leaves she had seen the movement of a snake" (VO., p. 269). Because the threat beneath the surface or under the leaves is so obviously sexual in Rachel's case, surely it would not be misreading to suggest that Rachel's snake is one of that species Freud identified for us. In this light Hirst's warning to Rachel and Terence as they go off into the jungle, "beware of snakes," is almost comical until viewed from the hindsight of Rachel's illness. For Rachel the jungle is as full of hidden depths and threats as is the ocean and she does indeed become the forest traveller "walking at the bottom of the sea" (VO., p. 277). The image suggests a voyager at the mercy of her environment as Rachel is. Jinny's jungle is of her own fancy with only the terrors she chooses to include; Rachel's is an awesome and literally overwhelming place.

Closely tied to the land in Woolf's use of metaphor, is the sea. Even Kitty sees her beloved moors as a "sea" (Y., p. 210). The sea, though often ruled by a male god, is traditionally seen as a female principle. It is the mother sea, a warm, saline environment that provides a womb for abundant life. But while it is comforting it is also horrifying. One can drown as well as swim in it and the watery surface often conceals monsters below. In Woolf's first novel, The Voyage Out, Rachel's sexual awakening is disturbed by a vision of some watery horror. When she sees Helen and Ridley kiss, she looks down into the sea and sees,

> the black ribs of wrecked ships, or the spiral towers made by the burrowings of great eels, or the smooth green-sided monsters who came by flickering this way and that. (VO., p. 23)

After Richard kisses her, she flees to the rail where she stays until she "ceased to feel," watching the "troubled grey waters" until she felt "calm" again (VO., p. 73).

Her jungle confrontations with Terence are also marked by water. After the first, she sits listening to the "senseless and cruel churning of the water" (VO., p. 279), while, in the second, the grass becomes an ocean, an aspect of the "waters in which they were now sunk" (VO., p. 290). In her third and final sexual scuffle with Terence, they imagine themselves standing on a rock together, "[t]o be flung into the sea, to be washed hither and thither" (VO., p. 305). Rachel responds to the image as if it were true, fighting with Terence until she is thrown to the floor where she gasps, "'I'm a mermaid! I can swim'" (VO., p. 305). But Rachel cannot swim and in the delirium of her fever she hears:

> the sound of the sea rolling over her head. While all her tormentors thought that she was dead, she was not dead, but curled up at the bottom of the sea. There she lay, sometimes

> seeing darkness, sometimes light, while every now and then someone turned her over at the bottom of the sea. (VO., p. 348)

For Clarissa Dalloway, as for Rachel Vinrace, the sea is full of terrors that must be confronted. At the novel's beginning, she feels herself "out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day" (MD., p. 11). She sees Peter's fiancé as a sea-demon and the love-struck Peter as "sucked under in his little bow-tie by that monster" (MD., p. 67). But while Clarissa Dalloway can go "[l]olloping on the waves" in her "silver-green mermaid's dress" (MD., p. 264), Septimus Smith succumbs for her. He is a "drowned sailor on a rock" (MD., p. 104) and Peter's association of Clarissa with Sirens implies her culpability in Septimus' death. Clarissa flings coins into the water ("never anything more" [MD., p. 280]) as if to prepare for her final crossing. Lady Bradshaw may stay afloat "wedged on a calm ocean" (MD., p. 143), but Clarissa's victory is that she can ride out the waves. She triumphs over the threat of the water just as she triumphs over the threat of fragmentation.

The third, and perhaps the most complex, of the important metaphor clusters in Woolf's writings is that which includes birds and flying insects. Sometimes the metaphors are simply used to point out characteristics; Mrs. Swithins is sparrow-like in her flitting about and Mrs. Dalloway is "light, vivacious" as a jay (MD., p. 4). Still there is something deeper even in the birds used for characterization, for when birds are male they are usually predatory, but when they are female they are vulnerable or helpless.[13] The relationship between female characters and flying things has, I believe, a great deal to do with the alluring combination of extreme vulnerability and immense freedom possessed by

flying creatures. Even more delicate than birds are butterflies, moths, and other winged insects whose very fragility is a part of their allure. Woolf is not interested, however, in the poignancy or romance of vulnerability, so much as she is determined to expose it as a trap. In her stories women may be given wings, but there are men nearby to see that they are never used.

In order to understand how Woolf is simultaneously combining the images of freedom and entrapment let us begin with a brief look at two of the stories in the collection Mrs. Dalloway's Party. We have already met Lily Everit, heroine of "The Introduction," in the preceding discussion of solid objects. When she is not clinging to her essay on the character of Dean Swift--or rather when she is finding it a stable life-raft and her ego is buoyed by it--she feels as though "she had come out of her chrysalis" (MDP., p. 39). But the chrysaline state is preferable to the realities of being such a fragile creature, or so Lily concludes:

> [she] was being proclaimed what in the long comfortable darkness of childhood she had never been--this frail and beautiful creature, this limited and circumscribed creature who could not do what she liked, this butterfly with a thousand facets to its eyes, and delicate fine plumage, and difficulties and sensibilities and sadnesses innumerable: a woman. (MDP., p. 39)

Lily feels that the metamorphosis has been forced upon her and that the finery, so false to her true nature, has become a burden. Still, she does want to be a butterfly so she concentrates hard on making her conversation with a scholarly young man come out right. Unable to respond correctly, she struggles out of fear that some suspicion of uniqueness might "get hold of her and shrivel up her wings and drive her out into loneliness" (MDP., p. 42). As the young man arrogantly discourses on his

own merits, she sees him as tearing the wings off a fly. Lily is horrified. On the one hand she feels that "to worship, to adorn, to embellish was her task, her wings were for that" (MDP., p. 42). But on the other hand she sees him nonchalantly pull the wings off a fly and "she could not hide the knowledge from herself . . . . and so tried to crouch and cower and fold the wings down flat on her back" (MDP., p. 42). Mr. Brinsley had, with his one action, "shrivelled her wings on her back" (MDP., p. 43), and destroyed her faith in sanctuaries and butterflies. At the story's end, one of the other characters comments that Lily looks "'as if she had the weight of the world upon her shoulders'" (MDP., p. 43), and indeed she does. Her beautiful wings, now shrivelled and useless, have become only a burden; their promise of freedom is gone.

Mabel Waring, the central figure of "The New Dress," finds herself transformed into a wet fly at one of Mrs. Dalloway's parties. Discontented with the unfashionable dress she has chosen, she cannot envision herself a butterfly as Lily did, but instead sees herself as a sodden, helpless fly. She tries to see the other guests as flies but feels that

> she was a fly, but the others were dragonflies, butterflies, beautiful insects, dancing, fluttering, skimming, while she alone dragged herself up out of the saucer. (MDP., p. 58)

As her situation at the party becomes more and more hopeless, Mabel strengthens her imaginative identification with the fly, its wings stuck together by milk. Now that she is forty, she thinks that she might soon "cease to struggle any more" (MDP., pp. 64-65), and she begins her surrender by leaving the party early. She lies to her hostess about how much she has enjoyed the evening, feeling herself "'[r]ight in the

saucer!'" and then wraps herself, "round and round, in the Chinese cloak she had worn these twenty years" (MDP., p. 65). Successful only in wetting her wings, and thus rendering them useless, Mabel retreats back to the cocoon-like wrap of the cloak and forfeits her possibility for freedom. She might have dried her wings, but she has accepted the proffered bonds.

In the novels, it is Sara Pargiter who is most closely linked with the flightless insect. Left alone during the party her mother and sister attend, she is a "chrysalis wrapped round in the sharp white folds of the sheet" (Y., p. 111). Hers is a cocoon that never opens. Sara is at best a grasshopper, a creature who nearly grasps flight in his long leaps, but whose wings remain primarily for show. Even as a bird, Sara remains flightless. Rose sees her as a bird at the zoo, caged and hopping rather than flying (Y., p. 133). Martin, too, sees Sara as a bird, a "dishevelled fowl" (Y., p. 175), presumably incapable of flight. Sara's madness gives her one kind of freedom. Certainly she is free of much responsibility; but she pays the price of having her wings clipped. There is something crippled in everything Sara does. She is literally disfigured from having been dropped as a child and her attempts at conversation are often abortive or simply parodic. She is something of a parrot in her gift for mimicry and, although she manages to make friends, her most important relationship, with Nicholas, is limited by his homosexuality. Her craziness has freed her from the stuffiness of Martin, but it has also rendered her incapable of the kind of relationship Maggie enjoys with Rene. Sara has wings, but they are never quite sufficient for flight.

The other woman in Woolf's novels most clearly associated with

the fragility of the flying creature is Rachel Vinrace. Rachel is connected to the moth in the novel The Voyage Out. She is the naive creature following her instincts and, in so doing, throwing herself into a flame. Following the night of the dance she wonders "what is it to be in love" and feels herself at that moment, "[h]ypnotized by the wings of the butterfly, and awed by the discovery of a terrible possibility in life" (VO., p. 176). The scene shifts to the hotel where Terence is absorbed in thought about Rachel and everyone in the room is complacent and at ease:

> [t]hey had the appearance of crocodiles so fully gorged by their last meal that the future of the world gives them no anxiety whatever. The only disturbance in the placid bright room was caused by a large moth which shot from light to light, whizzing over elaborate heads of hair, and causing several young women to raise their hands nervously and exclaim, 'Someone ought to kill it!' (VO., p. 183)

The agitated moth out of place in the complacent surroundings is Rachel Vinrace. She cannot treat love as Susan does with confidence, nor as Evelyn who takes an egocentric pleasure in the game. Instead Rachel is obsessive and out of control, instinctual rather than reasoning. At the novel's end, after Rachel's death, the scene with the moth is recreated. In the same hotel hall, the same people sit complacently while a moth dashes itself at the lamps. Finally,

> [a] young woman put down her needlework and exclaimed, 'Poor creature! it would be kinder to kill it.' But nobody seemed disposed to rouse himself in order to kill the moth. They watched it dash from lamp to lamp, because they were comfortable, and had nothing to do. (VO., p. 377)

There is, of course, no need to stir--or rather it is too late to stir--as the real moth, Rachel, is already dead.

There is one other passage in The Voyage Out in which Rachel is

explicitly connected to the moth in its self-consuming passion. Mrs. Flushing tells Rachel about her long-standing feud with her sister about closing her window at night to prevent moths from dashing themselves into the reading light. Turning to Rachel Mrs. Flushing inquires if she has "'ever seen a moth dyin' in a night-light?'" (VO., p. 200). But before Rachel can respond Hewet and Hirst enter and suddenly, "Rachel's heart beat hard. She was conscious of an extraordinary intensity in everything, as though their presence stripped some cover off the surface of things. . . ." Again she has become the moth, agitated and obsessed.[14]

Moths also accompany one of the decisive moments for Eleanor Pargiter in The Years, but, unlike Rachel, Eleanor does not succumb to the irrational. When Eleanor goes to visit Celia and Morris in the "1911" section of the novel she finds herself confronted with an old romance, William Whatney. Dressing for dinner, she examines herself for signs of aging and after the meal she contemplates the labels she has acquired; "an old maid who washes and watches birds. That's what they think I am. But I'm not--I'm not in the least like that" (Y., p. 156). She is conscious of her age, of the role she's been placed in, and aware that if she is to revive some flame with Whatney it must be now. That evening as she readies for bed the moths gather around the candle in the room. "Either I must get up and shut the window or blow out the candle, she thought drowsily. She did not want to do either. She wanted to lie still" (Y., p. 162). But as she thinks about her choices and listens to Whatney move in the next room, she makes her decision. Yes he had given her "that moment, which had been more than pleasure" (Y., p. 163) in the past, but she means to travel and be free. The stain on the ceiling reminds her that she doesn't want a house and that "[t]hings pass, things

change" (Y., p. 164); there is no guarantee that the moment could be recaptured anyway. The decision is enough to overcome her complacency and she "made an effort; turned round, and blew out the candle. Darkness reigned" (Y., p. 164). The moths were freed from their suicidal attraction.

Rhoda, who does commit suicide, is a butterfly not a moth. The butterfly image associated with Rhoda in The Waves marks her fragility, her other-worldliness. Louis, who will be her lover, sees it in her frame when they are children, "[h]er shoulder blades meet across her back like the wings of a small butterfly" (W., p. 15). As a result of her fragility Louis notes, "I . . . do not fear her as I fear the others" (W., p. 15). He feels that he shares alienation with Rhoda and that understanding is the basis for their brief union. But Louis' sense of alienation is based on tangible things, like an Australian accent, and his life is firmly rooted in business and material things. Rhoda's alienation is visceral, less solid, and grounded in her feelings of disembodiment.[15] Louis has roots that "wrap themselves round some hardness at the centre" (W., p. 23), while Rhoda has only the "shift and change" (W., p. 29) and an ever growing loss of personal identity. In the course of The Years Eleanor is able to build a strong sense of personal identity; in the course of The Waves Rhoda watches her hold on herself and on reality deteriorate until death is the only independent action left to her.

In truth Virginia Woolf took Eleanor's course, not Rhoda's. Just as Eleanor Pargiter refuses to let the conventions of her time or the expectations of her family dictate her life-style, so Woolf never allows the male-established authority of the novel's fictional conventions to deprive her of the authority of her insights--including insights into

the sexual lives of women. Woolf's novels are rich with images of female sexuality celebrating the fecundity and pleasure of connection while asserting the need for female privacy. Solid objects which appear immutable and thus anchor the self; landscapes which bespeak the variety, the depths, and the hidden terrors of exploring sexuality; and flying creatures, often fragile, which promise freedom but only rarely soar; all these images underline Woolf's understanding of the complexity of the sexual selves of women. Woolf uses metaphor not to deny or obscure female sexuality, but to assert and explore it. In that sense her novels are like the one Terence Hewet wished to write; they are about "the things people don't say" (VO., p. 220), or at the very least about the things that women didn't say in Woolf's time. Hers is a voice that asserts sexuality and female integrity with discretion, but it asserts them nonetheless.

CHAPTER IV

ANDROGYNY AND THE FEMALE ARTIST

Much has been made in recent years of Virginia Woolf's preoccupation with the notion of androgyny. Most of the critics who have written on the subject have assumed that Woolf's view of androgyny was sexual in spite of the fact that her most famous and prolonged discussion of the subject--the one in A Room of One's Own--goes to great lengths to minimize the sexual aspects of the theory.[1] As Phyllis Rose has pointed out, Woolf was more concerned with cerebral androgyny than with physical behavior.[2] Although characters who are in some way androgynous do appear in her fiction, the most celebrated example being, of course, Orlando, they are not always portrayed in a positive light. Furthermore, by the time we reach Three Guineas and The Years, Woolf seems to have abandoned the ideal of androgyny for a closer look at the immense differences, as she perceives them, between the sexes. Finally, in Between the Acts, the artist-hero is the exclusively woman-identified lesbian, Miss La Trobe. What Woolf is seeking is not the mystical balance of masculine and feminine attributes within the individual, but a freedom from the stereotypes of sex-differentiation. The androgyne as it appears in literature seeks to combine the attributes of masculine and feminine, which are culturally determined, rather than the biological differences suggested by male and female and joined in the mythic figure of the hermaphrodite. What Virginia Woolf sought was a denial of, or at least a transcendence of, those culturally based differences.

In the first of her two major feminist essays, A Room of One's Own, Woolf discusses androgyny as a way of exploring the fecundity of the creative mind. The androgyny she describes, in spite of the physical metaphor of a man and a woman getting into a taxi which she uses to define it, is almost entirely cerebral. What interests her is the "marriage of opposites" which must be "consummated" (Rm., p. 103) within the writer's head. "The writer," Woolf continues, ". . . must lie back and let his mind celebrate its nuptials in darkness." It is not character traits or modes of behavior that engage Woolf's attention here, but the idea that "some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the art of creation can be accomplished" (Rm., p. 103). At the same time as she wrote about this sexual union within the individual mind, Woolf seemed dissatisfied with it. "To think . . . of one sex as distinct from the other," she writes, "is an effort. It interferes with the unity of the mind" (Rm., p. 95). She also argues that "it is one of the tokens of the fully developed mind that it does not think specially or separately of sex" (Rm., p. 97).

In A Room of One's Own Woolf is expressing her dissatisfaction with the fiction of her day, particularly with what she describes as the self-conscious virility (Rm., p. 100) of writers like Galsworthy and Kipling who are so unrelentingly male that they render themselves impotent. (As Woolf describes it, their books lack suggestive power, "and when a book lacks suggestive power, however hard it hits the surface of the mind it cannot penetrate within" [Rm., p. 101].) Woolf tries to temper her criticism by suggesting that these men need a feminine balance to their writing. But what Woolf appears to object to, here and elsewhere, is the selfishness of the uncontained male ego.[3] Represented by the

letter 'I' in her discussion of a novel by "Mr. A", it blocks and obscures, dominating the landscape and producing an overwhelming aridity in which nothing--particularly a woman, Woolf implies--could grow (Rm., p. 99). This is the same horrid male "I" that attacks Peggy like a "vulture's beak" in the "Present Day" section of The Years (Y., p. 275). It is another aspect of the "arid scimitar . . . of the egotistical man" that James sees attacking his mother in To the Lighthouse (TTL., p. 39). These male egos, represented in the novels by William Rodney, Peter Walsh, Mr. Ramsay, Abel Pargiter, and Giles Oliver, demand much of women, and, in their own overwhelming need, obscure the needs of others. As Phyllis Rose has pointed out, at the time of A Room of One's Own, Woolf wanted both men and women to transcend their sex and write without self-consciousness of their own condition.[4] The androgyne strikes an uneasy balance between lack of self-consciousness and simply self-consciousness of a new kind.

If Woolf seems hesitant or ambivalent about the notion of the androgyne in A Room of One's Own, she has dispensed with it entirely by the appearance of Three Guineas, ten years later. The androgyne of A Room of One's Own is not compatible with the "outsider" of Three Guineas. If the theory of androgyny hoped to mitigate the voraciousness of the male ego with an infusion of feminine characteristics, then the notion of the "outsider" is a proposal for a full assault. Woolf wants the outsider to reject all the trappings of the patriarchy including institutions of state, church, law and education. Women are to practice "indifference" (TG., p. 123) to male compulsions such as patriotism and are to preserve "chastity" of mind (TG., p. 92). Unlike the androgynous mind of ten years earlier, this new woman rejects the male invasion of her intellect and remains true to the woman in herself. There is little of the

ambiguity of A Room of One's Own present in Three Guineas. By no longer adopting a path of cautious reform, Woolf seems to have found a resolution which, while every bit as idealistic as the one proposed in A Room of One's Own, is no longer self-contradictory. She is still rebelling against the foolishness of feminine/masculine culturally determined sex differences but she no longer sees cerebral "nuptials" as the solution. The outsider, like many of the central women characters of Woolf's novels, must have her own integrity as a woman first; any successful unions must follow the establishment of that autonomous position.

The attitude that dominates Woolf's novels is, not surprisingly, the one represented by Three Guineas. Although the theory is never presented in the fiction with the force of the feminist polemic that surrounds it in Three Guineas, it is still sexual integrity, not androgyny, that is celebrated in the novels. Even Orlando has less to do with an androgyne than most critics have perceived. If we go through the novels in order we will see how the notion of the necessity for integrity is progressively strengthened while the promise of androgyny, in contrast, weakens.

In The Voyage Out St. John Hirst represents the voracious male ego. Dismissing Rachel as naive and unworthy of his time and attention, he lectures her on her lack of education, declaring, "'can one really talk to you? Have you got a mind, or are you like the rest of your sex? . . . It's awfully difficult to tell about women . . . how much, I mean, is due to lack of training, and how much is native incapacity'" (VO., p. 153). Still, he holds a certain fascination for Rachel, who discovers, much to her dismay when she attempts to dance with him, that, "instead of fitting into each other their bones seemed to jut out in angles" (VO.,

p. 152). Their physical incompatibility is matched by their mental and emotional incompatibility and Hirst soon fades into the background to be replaced by Hewet as the best eligible suitor for Rachel. Surprisingly, it is the two men who are said to be womanly in some way, Richard Dalloway and Terence Hewet, who provide the real threat to Rachel's sexual integrity.

It is their "feminine" aspects that make Terence and Richard more seductive; apparently softer and more accommodating than the angular Hirst, they appear more appealing and attractive. But theirs is a false femininity based only on a few surface characteristics. Richard speaks "sententiously" to Rachel of the "power" of being a woman and then grabs her and kisses her (VO., p. 73). His praise of her sex is only a tool of his seduction. Terence seems to genuinely care for Rachel, but he fails to understand that he is a threat to her freedom and personal integrity. As we shall see, Terence willfully overcomes all the objections he raises to his union with Rachel; it is left to Helen Ambrose to feel "uneasy" (VO., p. 284) at the relationship.

Early on in the novel Clarissa tells Rachel that Richard is "man and woman as well" and as such "he gave me all I wanted" (VO., p. 57). Rachel seems fascinated by Richard until he kisses her and she experiences the reality beneath the fantasy, just as the skeletons appear beneath the calm and inviting surface of the water. Later Evelyn tells her that "'there's something of a woman in [Terence]'", adding that "the finest men were like women" (VO., p. 253). Terence, as I have already shown in my discussion of metaphor, is the final threat to Rachel's integrity. Her death is a reflection of her inability to surrender to the compromises that a marriage was sure to bring. Terence realizes the problem himself

but is both powerless to do anything about it and unable even to express his concerns to Rachel. When he reflects on marriage he recognizes that he always views it as an entrapment, couples are

> walled up in a warm firelit room . . . All the most individual and humane of his friends were bachelors and spinsters; indeed he was surprised to find that the women he most admired and knew best were unmarried women . . . Even the Ambroses, whom he admired and respected profoundly--in spite of all the love between them, was not their marriage too a compromise? She gave to him; she spoilt him; she arranged things for him; she who was all truth to others was not true to her husband, was not true to her friends if they came in conflict with her husband. (VO., pp. 247-48)

At the end of his reflections Terence remembers Rachel's comment on their relationship--"[w]e bring out what's worst in each other--we should live separate'" (VO., p. 248). At this recollection he suddenly feels that she is wrong and his ego takes over and he decides that they must marry, that he must possess her. The narrative makes clear a profound separateness which the lovers never acknowledge. Feeling themselves united, Rachel and Terence confront their reflection:

> it chilled them to see themselves in the glass, for instead of being vast and indivisible they were really very small and separate, the size of the glass leaving a large space for the reflection of other things. (VO., p. 310)

Like self-blinded Narcissus, they fail to recognize the message of the reflection and plunge, unthinking, into the pool.

Rachel and Terence are not victimized by their lack of androgyny, nor even by the myopia of Terence's ego, but rather by the society as a whole--the same patriarchal society that Woolf finally rejects in Three Guineas. From the novel's beginning we've seen the problems emerging. Rachel, raised by obsessively sheltering maiden aunts, is much too naive for a healthy twenty-four year old woman. Helen, angry at the younger

woman's ignorance, takes it upon herself to show Rachel "how to live" (VO., p. 80), but the damage is done and Rachel seems unable, or unwilling, to cope with the complexities of relationships between men and women. The frightful ignorance of the women of her time in matters both sexual and worldly is railed against by Woolf in The Voyage Out, Night and Day, Mrs. Dalloway, and The Years, and though Rachel may be the only fatality she is not the only victim of society's double standard.

Stephen Trombley points out that Rachel's final illness is experienced as a complete "withdrawal from the human world"[5] which parallels the detachment she felt at Richard Dalloway's kiss. By the novel's end, Rachel has literally "disowned her body,"[6] not even recognizing that the limbs the nurse touches are her own. Trombley makes the case, most convincingly, that Rachel rejects her own body as a result of "her profound sense of shame where anything to do with the body is concerned."[7] As Trombley concludes, "Rachel's illness has no empirical aetiology. Her decline is of the nature of a lapse of being."[8] As Rachel lies in bed feeling her body become "a drift of melting snow" (VO., p. 353), or her mind "escaped and gone flitting round the room" (VO., p. 354), she desires only "to be alone. She wished for nothing else in the world" (VO., p. 354). It is the last time we enter Rachel's consciousness and we see there only a desire for the autonomy she had surrendered. There is a way in which Rachel is like "Mackenzie, the famous explorer, [who] had died of fever some ten years ago, almost within reach of civilization" (VO., p. 284), and whose hut the boating party had passed on their way up the river. Mackenzie had travelled further than anyone else but he paid with his life. When the boat passes his hut the "eyes of Rachel saw nothing" (VO., p. 284). Rachel, too, will pay for

her explorations with her life. Schooled in ignorance all her life, she is unable to learn from, or even to recognize, the lessons of the past. Rachel's death is, at least in part then, a result of her own appalling ignorance, an ignorance that the society in which she lived worked hard to preserve in its young upper class women. The society that defines women as pure and weak and men as vigorous and vital and defines separate moral universes for the two sexes must take some of the responsibility when the ideals are made reality by over-zealous converts, like Rachel's harmless maiden aunts.

Night and Day ends more happily than The Voyage Out but again the outcome rests not on the vague notion of androgyny but on a new understanding of sexual difference. Katharine and Ralph's union may be successful, the reader feels, because, while not denying sexual difference, the two do not accept as absolute all the roles society has drawn for them. Woolf does, however, portray Katharine as at least intellectually androgynous. William Rodney is the pure male--he is, after all, a "rod," in spite of his slight effeminacy[9]--while Cassandra is the pure female. It is William who first notices Katharine's potential masculinity, although it is hardly perceived amongst admirable traits. Reflecting on the differences between Cassandra and Katharine, William sees the former as "engaging [and] whimsical" while the latter is "undemonstrative, inconsiderate [and] silent," characteristics which "seemed to him rather masculine than feminine" (N&D., p. 257). Already Woolf notes how threatened men may become when they perceive something of their concept of the masculine prerogative in women. William is "chilled" by his discovery and feels only an "exasperating sense of his own impotency" (N&D., p. 257). Clearly the threat William feels is a sexual one and he

distinguishes male and female according to obvious stereotypes. As an antidote to Katharine's assault on his masculinity, William seeks the absolute femininity of Cassandra. Set against the integrity and intelligence of Katharine, Cassandra is little more than an inflatable doll, but she is what the cowardly Rodney desires and deserves.

Ralph is not drawn as an androgyne but as a reasonably perceptive and progressive young man. If Katharine represents, as the narrator suggests, "the manly . . . [side] of the feminine nature" (N&D., p. 309), then he is not threatened by it. Although he desires Katharine he also respects her, including her mathematics, and he seems undaunted by the prospect of a mildly liberated wife. Still, the rejection of Mary Datchet does leave a gap in the novel's centre. One cannot help feeling that Ralph has chosen the lesser of the two women. For all her style, elegance, and intelligence, whatever integrity Katharine possesses seems shallow compared to Mary's. Certainly Mary is the more committed free-thinker and feminist, but while she is admirable in her work she is almost saintly in her private virtue. Her calm acceptance of Ralph's decision makes her appear as something of a martyred innocent and taints the reader's satisfaction with the novel's outcome. There is a faint sense of foreboding also in Ralph's likening of Katharine to "a wild bird just settling with wings trembling to fold themselves within reach of his hand" (N&D., p. 446). The image suggests that the hand is about to entrap the bird and as I have already noted elsewhere, Woolf often uses metaphors of birds and other winged creatures to suggest women's helplessness and frustration at being grounded more often than to suggest their joy in flight. Katharine's reveries on love in the last paragraph of the novel do not suggest that she and Ralph have got beyond the traditional,

romanticized roles at all. She sees his eyes as "blindly adoring" and wonders, when she speaks, "whom did he answer? What woman did he see?" (N&D., p. 459). In spite of the earlier promise of their relationship, by the end they seem to have become only a slightly more interesting version of William and Cassandra. I submit that the novel's conclusion is not so happy as most readers, and even Woolf herself, perceived it to be. Rachel dies in The Voyage Out while in Night and Day Katharine accepts an only slightly modified compromise. It is not until Lily Briscoe that Woolf portrays a woman both uncompromised and unsacrificed.

Although about a young man and as such a celebration of virility, Jacob's Room can be read, on one level, as the fantasy of a woman's life. Jacob, with his artistic sensibility, is, in some slight way, androgynous. But it is his life of education, travel, and personal and sexual freedom that is the private fantasy of many an intelligent woman--perhaps even of Woolf herself, who made no secret about her resentment of her lack of formal education. As such the book portrays the potential but unrealized life of women like Katharine Hilbery or Kitty Malone. While Jacob's Room tells the story of an admirable young man whose life is tragically ended by World War One, it also represents the ideal progress to maturity for anyone so richly endowed. This is the way any young person's life should go, Woolf seems to be saying in the novel, but Jacob's maleness makes his freedom acceptable just as it makes his tragic end, in society's terms, acceptable. Woolf was already aware of the problems inherent in the patriarchy as her characterization of Mr. Hilbery at the end of Night and Day made clear. When Katharine tells him of her engagement to Ralph, he leaves the room without looking at her,

> leaving in the minds of the women a sense . . . of the extravagant, inconsiderate, uncivilized male, outraged somehow and gone bellowing to his lair with a roar which still sometimes reverberates in the most polished of drawing-rooms. (N&D., p. 453)

The veneer of civilization, as Woolf sees it, is an ineffectual camouflage for the potentially violent animal beneath.

Although she didn't lecture on the relationship of the patriarchal system to war until the time of Three Guineas, her understanding of the connection is present in her portrayal of the society in all her early novels. While she celebrates Jacob's youth and freedom, she decries the system that is so accepting of the sacrifice of lives to military endeavors.

The society that allows Jacob to die a young man in a futile war is the same one that condemns Julia Hedge to her rage in the library. Julia's name is an apt one for she does indeed see herself, and all women, as "hedged" in. Looking around at the books in the library--all by men--she wonders, "'why didn't they leave room for an Eliot or a Brontë?'" (JR., p. 103). Julia feels unnerved by the complacency of the young men around her and applies herself even more studiously to the proof of her absurd theories. Although the quick portrait is mostly a comic one, Julia Hedge's "gall and bitter dust" (JR., p. 103) are real enough, whatever the flaws in her theories.

If Jacob's Room presents the fantasy of the unfettered life, then Mrs. Dalloway presents what was, for women of Woolf's class, the all too frequent, stifling reality. Clarissa represents not so much androgyny as an almost total sublimation of erotic feeling. But for all the references to Clarissa's "nun"-like condition, or "cloistered" room, or

"virginity," she is capable of strong sexual feeling, for women if not particularly for men. When she contemplates "yielding to the charm of a woman," she imagines the moment of union as if she were responding to penetration by the male organ,

> [i]t was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores! Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over--the moment. (MD., p. 47)

"Against such moments (with women too)," Clarissa's fantasy ends abruptly, "there contrasted . . . the bed and Baron Marbot and the candle half-burnt" (MD., p. 47). In other words, against her fantasy of uninhibited and explosive sexuality lies the reality of the roles of wife, society hostess, and homemaker represented by the three things that halt her reverie. Clarissa is a good hostess and a good wife within the limits prescribed by society, but the world which gave her numerous skills as flower arranger, organizer, and party-giver, also made it difficult for her to accept her own passion. Clarissa's refrain, "Fear no more the heat of the sun," is, as we have seen in the preceding discussion of metaphor, in part a response to her memories of passion or at least the possibilities of it.

Critics have often complained[10] that Clarissa Dalloway is cold, a bit of a snob, and rather dull. She is those things, but she is also warm, considerate, and inspired. Clarissa represents the repressed potential; she is society's projection of woman as hostess and homemaker at the cost of her own more private and passionate self. And it is not

just sexual passion she sublimates. She hides her anger at Lady Bruton's invitation, tempers her animosity to Miss Kilman, and stifles her boredom at some of her party guests. Clarissa has learnt her roles so well that it takes the drama of a suicide to shake her complacency. Not surprisingly, considering her careful existence, Septimus' suicide reminds Clarissa not of encroaching death, but instead his action "made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun" (MD., p. 284). Septimus' dramatic act of self-preservation (certainly that is the way he saw it) is the stimulus Clarissa needs to re-evaluate her own priorities.

If Clarissa Dalloway is representative of woman as the society hostess, then Mrs. Ramsay is the even more idealistic and archetypal maternal figure. The Ramsays represent the eternal and absolute masculine and feminine in the novel while Lily Briscoe is the mediating force--both literally and metaphorically--between them. But Lily does not represent the median by virtue of some quality of the androgyne; rather her role is a result of her independence. Lily refuses to be manipulated into a marriage by Mrs. Ramsay or into being a mirror for the reflection of his ego[11] by Mr. Ramsay. Instead she remains true to herself, continuing to paint even though her work may never be hung anywhere but in the servant's quarters, and keeping her independence in spite of the temptations of marriage--among them the promise of financial security. Lily Briscoe is the first really strong and uncompromised woman whom Woolf portrays. She is a dynamic character, growing from a weak, slightly self-pitying person to a proud content woman no longer afraid of her own anger or aloneness. Her growth parallels her rebellion against traditional roles. Lily does not progress by acquiring male characteristics but by discovering the strengths and possibilities of her own femaleness. She becomes whole

within those limits. Hers is the freedom that comes from the transcendence of culturally determined sex roles and, as Woolf noted in A Room of One's Own, it is the most promising freedom of all. As I have shown in the preceding discussion of metaphor, Lily acquires, in the concluding passage, the images that had been Mrs. Ramsay's in the first section. The fountain and the pulsating beam of the lighthouse represent, ultimately, Lily's uncompromised integrity, their talismanic power strengthened by the fact that they are earned, like shoes one must grow to fill. Lily has, in a sense, grown to fill Mrs. Ramsay's shoes by the novel's end, but she does so, at least in part, by her refusal to take on the dead woman's roles. The growth is her own then, the fit a recognition of the worthiness of her choice of independence.

The question of sexual definition is somewhat more complex in The Waves. The six central characters represent three different aspects of the feminine and three different aspects of the masculine. None of them are really androgynous although Neville, the homosexual, might be said to contain something of the feminine. Of course if we read the six figures as all aspects of one consciousness (a common enough reading,[12] though not one that I support), then they do represent the androgynous consciousness. But in spite of the possibilities of that reading, the dominant concern of this aspect of the book is that of establishing individual identity--including sexual identity--as male or female. The character who is the most successful is Bernard; he is the one most able to act as an autonomous being. His masculinity is not threatened by the disorientation of love--described as running "bang into a pillar box" (W., p. 96)--nor does he need to prove himself by affairs as Louis and Jinny seem to, or by fertility as Susan does. Bernard is complete in

himself, free of many of the stereotypes of masculinity without sacrificing any of his maleness.

Like Bernard the male Orlando is complete in himself. As Phyllis Rose has pointed out "Orlando is no tragic story of a woman trapped in a man's body, a man in a woman's. Orlando as a man is perfectly content, does not feel, . . . that he is leaving part of his human potential unfulfilled."[13] It is only as a woman that the normally free-spirited and active Orlando begins to express dissatisfaction with her condition. And it is not a dissatisfaction with the condition of being female, but with the limitations placed upon her by external forces. Orlando can no longer act or speak or even dress freely and her right to her property is suddenly threatened. Orlando does not need the masculine to complete her--Shelmerdine can hardly be viewed as the archetypal male --but rather she needs the means to escape some of the confines of the roles assigned to her. As Rose suggests, the book is concerned not so much with androgyny as with the idea of eliminating externally enforced roles. In Rose's words:

> [t]he rapid pace, the constant changes, the unfailing satire of the book have the effect of leaving the reader thoroughly and comically confused as to what sex is. Is it determined by one's drives (to make war or babies, paintings or soups), or by one's genitals, or by one's clothes? What do we mean when we say one sex or the other is uppermost in a person? What do we signify by talking of a man in a woman's body or a woman in a man's? Isn't any sort of distinction between male and female characteristics spurious? At the very least, crude?[14]

Orlando is generally accepted as Woolf's central statement on the theme of androgyny, but if we look at it from the perspective suggested by Rose we see that it is again attacking the very concepts of masculine and feminine rather than celebrating the possibility of some mystical

balance between the two. Perhaps Woolf recognized that, in most mythologies that contain the idea of the androgyne, the feminine is evil or darkness while the masculine is goodness or light.[15] As an already established concept, the androgyne is not really a useful tool for re-thinking sexual stereotyping. Far from being a revolutionary idea, the notion of androgyny only perpetuates old myths. I think Woolf recognized this, perhaps unconsciously, and although she continued to use the word, particularly in her correspondence, she had long since ceased--if indeed she ever did--to promulgate the theory.

After Orlando came The Years and Three Guineas, works so closely connected that Woolf had at first conceived them as a single book. Three Guineas is Woolf at her most radically feminist. It is an aggressive book with a thin veil of humour often failing to conceal the underlying anger. As I have already noted there is no question of an androgynous solution in this book; Three Guineas is a forthright and absolute condemnation of the patriarchy. Less obvious, but arguing for the same changes, is The Years. In The Years Virginia Woolf makes thorough use of the stereotypes of masculine and feminine. All the characters are locked, to varying degrees, into the roles society has cast for them. The Pargiter men take up the professions of education, law and the military[16] which Woolf had so savagely attacked in Three Guineas. The women, at least Abel's daughters, also follow predictable paths, the eldest giving up her freedom to care for her aging father while the other two marry their fantasy men, unaware of the ironies of their choices. Eleanor, by sacrificing her youth, finds herself free in middle age and, faced with an old beau, chooses to retain her hard-won independence. The youngest, Rose, is jailed at one point for her militant feminist activity and, like

Rachel Vinrace before her, seems to have suffered for her own ignorance. Unable to share her terror at being accosted as a child, Rose assumes a burden of guilt and fear. As Woolf points out in the essay portions of The Pargiters, all the girls in the novel share a common and pathetic bond of ignorance and repression.[17]

Digby Pargiter's daughters fare slightly better than their cousins. Maggie settles into a happy and mildly unconventional marriage with an attractive and apparently sympathetic Frenchman, while Sara escapes the demands of society's expectations in benign madness. The two remaining women of note in the novel, Kitty Malone and Peggy Pargiter, are not so lucky. Kitty deliberately avoids the man who promises passion and chooses instead to marry for land. Peggy, the niece of Abel's daughters, is torn between two sets of stereotypes and finds herself hopelessly compromised. What should have been a generation of promise appears only as a generation of new conflicts and problems.

The Years not only fails to suggest androgyny as a possible bridge between the sexes but seems to imply that there is no reliable bridge to be found. From the very beginning, the sexes are set against each other and all relationships seem tainted. It is a book full of missed or aborted communications and from Rose's fights with Martin to the children's garbled song at the party, no attempt at expression is entirely successful. Even within one sex, communications are flawed. Edward, as a student at Oxford, feels his own hand to be "'finicky' . . . like a girl's," beside Gibbs' hand which "was like a piece of raw meat" (Y., p. 42). Similarly Rose, who is described as "more like a man than a woman" (Y., p. 131), is unable to communicate with Maggie, whom she has gone to visit. For both of these characters the physical trappings of

androgyny only make relationships more difficult. And what of the ending of The Years? It is as if the famous cab of A Room of One's Own has come to rest at the Pargiter's front door. And from that cab--the symbol of androgyny, of the masculine and feminine conjoined into the creative matrix--step two individual beings, a male and a female.

In A Room of One's Own Woolf looks out on a London street and observes that the people on it "all seemed separate, self-absorbed, on business of their own" (Rm., p. 94). After a lull in the traffic she feels a force that was

> bringing from one side of the street to the other diagonally a girl in patent leather boots, and then a young man in a maroon overcoat; it was also bringing a taxi-cab; and it brought all three together at a point directly beneath my window; where the taxi stopped; and the girl and the young man stopped; and they got into the taxi; and then the cab glided off as if it were swept on by the current elsewhere. . . . when I saw the couple getting into the taxi-cab the mind felt as if, after being divided, it had come together again in a natural fusion. (Rm., pp. 95-96)

In The Years almost the reverse occurs. As Eleanor watches out the window a taxi

> stopped in front of a house two doors down. . . . A young man had got out; he paid the driver. Then a girl in a tweed travelling suit followed him. He fitted his latch-key to the door. 'There,' Eleanor murmured, as he opened the door and they stood for a moment on the threshold. 'There!' she repeated, as the door shut with a little thud behind them. (Y., pp. 330-31)

Although the young couple in The Years do enter the house together, that action does not conjure up the same image of joining as does the cab in A Room of One's Own. For one thing the couple in A Room go off together in a small, mobile auto that appeared "swept on by the current," a single unit. In The Years the potential union in the house is marked by the

ominous "thud" of the door. There is a bleak finality in that sound, a suggestion of the "heart of darkness" (BA., p. 158) that ends Between the Acts. The couple's entry into the house does not seem to promise union so much as it suggests inevitable confrontation between two opposing forces. Perhaps Eleanor's second exultant "'There!'" is a recognition of that separateness, but that leaves us with the unresolved "'And now?'" (Y., p. 331).

Woolf herself seemed unable to resolve that question in her final novel, Between the Acts. Having acknowledged that the two people in the cab remain autonomous and do not produce a mystical union in the figure of the androgyne, she is left with the problem of bringing them together some other way. The resolution suggested in the bleak final passage of Between the Acts--"they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born. But first they must fight, as the dog fox fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night" (BA., p. 158)--is not very encouraging.

What positive resolution the novel offers seems to be as a direct result of Miss La Trobe's art. When Isa and Giles speak at the novel's end they appear as the characters, the "two scarcely perceptible figures" (BA., p. 154), of Miss La Trobe's new play, conceived in the dark, smoke-filled bar. Alone, Miss La Trobe is both autonomous and, in the creative if not the biological sense, fecund. She does not claim, as Mrs. Manresa does, to represent "'just human nature'" (BA., p. 77), but in actual fact she comes much closer to that state than anyone else in the novel. As an artist and a lesbian, she is independent, a free-thinker, a woman content to ignore stereotypes and absorb the criticisms that follow her acts. Indeed Miss La Trobe seems to take pleasure in

anticipating her own sins, "[o]ne of these days she would break--which of the village laws? Sobriety? Chastity?" (BA., p. 153).

There is more than a suggestion of satire in Woolf's characterization of Miss La Trobe, however. The playwright is portrayed as something of a failure. She drinks too heavily, or has done "[s]ince the row with the actress who had shared her bed" (BA., p. 153), and she suffers "the horror and the terror of being alone" (BA., p. 153). No one appears to take her work very seriously and it fails even to measure up to her own requirements. Perhaps not an altogether admirable woman, La Trobe still captures our sympathy. Her judgment of her own work seems unnecessarily harsh, her moment of satisfaction too brief:

> [y]ou have taken my gift! Glory possessed her--for one moment. But what had she given? . . . It was in the giving that the triumph was. And the triumph faded. Her gift meant nothing. If they had understood her meaning; if they had known their parts . . . it would have been a better gift. (BA., p. 151)

Miss La Trobe has forgotten that for at least one member of the audience her gift did mean something and it was understood. The play may have failed on other levels, but Miss La Trobe did earn Mrs. Swithin's sincere congratulations. After all, she made the old woman exclaim, "'you've made me feel I could have played . . . Cleopatra!'" (BA., p. 112, ellipsis Woolf's). Certainly that constitutes a moment of triumph.

In her work on Woolf's androgynous vision, Nancy Topping Bazin argues that "[t]he need for man to become androgynous is illustrated by the fragmented nature of the characters in Between the Acts."[18] Bazin finds the evidence for this in the way "that the personalities of the different characters seem to complete each other."[19] But while the characters are sharply contrasted they are hardly complementary. It is

difficult to imagine William Dodge as a complement to Giles, as Bazin suggests, when the latter appears to harbour almost murderous instincts towards the former. Dodge, in a moment of depression, sees himself as a "'mind-divided little snake in the grass . . . as Giles saw" (BA, p. 57) --mind-divided, it would appear, because forced by others' expectations to play a role, that of husband and father, foreign to his homosexual nature. Later Giles deliberately steps on a snake and walks through the rest of the novel with blood on his shoes, declaring his masculinity at every step. His wife's reaction, quite unlike that of the flirtatious Mrs. Manresa, is to declare him a "[s]illy little boy, with blood on his boots" (BA., p. 84).

Giles' is not the only ego undercut in the course of the novel but still the book is more positive than its immediate predecessor, The Years. The possibility of Miss La Trobe's art, of communicative language springing, as it appears to do, from the fecundity of mud, is a promise of more attempts at union, if nothing else. The novel ends between acts and as the curtain rises in the last line the reader can only hope for a continuation of the script: in spite of the fights, life goes on. Herein lies the answer to Eleanor's "and now?" The roles will continue to be played out with new amendments and revisions and perhaps, somewhere in the future, there will be more room for improvisation and less reliance on a predetermined script.

It is this freedom from preconceived notions of masculine and feminine, not the union of androgyny, that Woolf has been consistently seeking and exploring in her novels. Where the androgyne appears it is not offered as a resolution, but as another potential problem. Only by eliminating cultural definitions of masculine and feminine, Woolf seems

to suggest, can we achieve any sexual success. Success, not in the sense of conquest, but in the sense of the union that comes as a result of shared appreciation and acceptance--a condition that encourages creativity and independence rather than conformity and sterility. From The Voyage Out to Between the Acts, Woolf maintains her emphasis on integrity in her discussions of the masculine and feminine. The earthly union can be as fertile as the mythical androgynous one, she seems to suggest in her portrayal of couples like Maggie and Rene; but the odds are steep against success and the cost is often great. Maybe that fight at the end of Between the Acts is partly in promise--after all, fighting is one way of continuing to act at all--; it certainly does not appear as resignation. The solutions for Woolf are never easy ones and the concept of androgyny, elusive, ill-defined, and residing in a mythical realm, is an easy solution. Woolf wanted an earthly resolution that would seek "to liberate the individual from the confines of the appropriate,"[20] just as androgyny does at a mythical level. If she never quite found it, it was not for want of exploring the possibilities, in content, in metaphor, even in the structure of the language itself. Even in Woolf's most pessimistic work, like The Years, there is always the promise of future union and compatibility, even when the reality of the present day seems bleak and sterile.

CONTINUITY: A POSTLUDE

When Woolf wrote about the female tradition, in her own discussions of the literary women who had preceded her, she no doubt thought of herself as being the next in that procession. Time has proven her correct. Woolf remains outstanding among English-speaking women writers. Along with her novels and short stories, she has left us many pages of perceptive criticism and one of the most complete literary lives of her time in volume upon volume of letters and diaries. Her enigmatic life, with its many dark shadows and half-kept secrets, lures and fascinates as do the characters she created. Her feminist writings, most notably A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas but also the essays and speeches now collected in Women and Writing and The Pargiters, speak as eloquently today of the problems and needs of women as they did half a century ago.

This continuing timeliness has caused contemporary women writers, artists, and critics like Louise Bernikow, Judy Chicago, or Ellen Moers[1] to declare Woolf part of their personal "great tradition." Chicago, who chose Woolf to be one of the thirty-nine place settings at her monumental work The Dinner Party, wrote, in her reasons for her selections, that,

> [a]lthough women have been writing about their experience for centuries, they have not had their own language; this is the problem Woolf addressed. Her work, like the beacon emanating from the lighthouse in her most famous book, illuminated the path to a woman-formed language in literature.[2]

Woolf believed in a woman's sentence and in the validity of the

expressions of a female sensibility. Perhaps those beliefs, rather than the elusive facts which would prove her claims true or false, are what is important. By celebrating the uniqueness and the achievements of a female tradition, Woolf opened the door to a great liberation--the freedom to speak in one's own voice, in one's own style. When the poet Marge Piercy wrote in 1977 that women must concentrate on "Unlearning to not speak,"[3] she was only paraphrasing what Woolf had already told us in her essays on literary women. Woolf spent her own life, I think, "Unlearning to not speak" and telling other women to do the same. In her concluding remarks to A Room of One's Own she argued that Shakespeare's sister would only appear if women continued to write even in "poverty and obscurity" (Rm., p. 112).

Woolf learned to speak in many ways. She learned to speak through metaphor with an evasive voice that made the comprehending reader as guilty of any transgression as the writer. Metaphor is intimate: an inside joke. She learned rhetoric with which to put forth convincing arguments against the patriarchy and irony and humour with which she often softened the blows. She spoke with anger, sarcasm and ridicule but also with praise, encouragement, and joy. Her voice challenges and soothes. She spoke for and against individuals and causes, men and women in her criticism. She learned to speak through the many voices of her fiction--the narrator's, the character's, the story's, and the author's. She learned to stand up and speak out as she did at Newnham and Girton in 1928 or before the London/National Society for Women's Service in 1931. She learned to speak also through her actions: through her steadfast refusal to accept awards or titles offered her by any institutions she deemed patriarchal, through her pacifism, and even

through her suicide, perhaps her loudest cry of all. Finally she spoke in her life itself: in her outpouring of energy and support towards women in her family, in her circle of friends, and in her profession. And as she learned to speak, she listened. Virginia Woolf was a good listener. If she sometimes heard the birds singing in Greek, so be it. She also heard the many voices of women and she recognized them for what they were--simply the voices of women--and she tried, through her fiction, and through her criticism, to give those voices a place in the traditions of literature.

Today we listen to Virginia Woolf's voice. It has a fair timbre to it; there is the weight of many pages of writing behind it. She is not an angel in the house stopping the flow of ink upon the page; her voice encourages, begs that we speak, asks us also to listen. Woolf truly wrote a place for herself in the tradition of literary women. Her voice will be heard for a long time yet. "Lies," she once wrote, "will flow from my lips, but there may perhaps be some truth mixed up with them; it is for you to seek out this truth and to decide whether any part of it is worth keeping" (Rm., p. 6). I have tried, in my work here, to seek out some of the truths Woolf spoke about women; I can only say now that I find many of them worth keeping. Woolf has much to say and I am not yet tired of listening.

NOTES

Chapter I: Establishing the Feminist Aesthetic

[1]Numerous people have written about the artistic interrelationships of Bloomsbury, among them:

Quentin Bell, Bloomsbury (London: Omega Books, 1976).

Leon Edel, Bloomsbury: A House of Lions (New York: J. P. Lippincott, 1979).

Allen McLaurin, Virginia Woolf: The Echoes Enslaved (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

J. K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954).

[2]George Edward Moore, Principia Ethica (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), p. 21. Moore makes the point that although "good" is "indefinable, unanalysable" we nevertheless can and do recognize it.

[3]For a more complete discussion of Moore's influence on Bloomsbury in general see J. K. Johnstone, "Bloomsbury Philosophy" and "Bloomsbury Aesthetics," The Bloomsbury Group (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954), pp. 46-95.

[4]Virginia Woolf, "Old Bloomsbury," Moments of Being, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (Frogmore, St. Albans: Triad/Panther Books, 1976), p. 194.

[5]Clive Bell, Art (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., n.d.), p. 6.

[6]Bell, p. 3.

[7]Roger Fry, Vision and Design (New York: Meridan Books, 1960), pp. 301-302.

[8]Fry, p. 302.

[9]Fry, p. 12.

[10]Fry, p. 34.

[11]Fry, p. 29.

[12]Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1950), p. 95.

[13]Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," p. 112.

[14]Virginia Woolf, "Revolving Lights," Women and Writing, ed. Michèle Barrett (London: The Women's Press, 1979), p. 191.

[15]Virginia Woolf, "Women Novelists," Women and Writing, p. 71.

[16]Virginia Woolf, "Speech Before the London/National Society for Women's Service, January 21, 1931," The Pargiters: The Novel Essay Portion of The Years, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), pp. xxix-xxx. The editor's marks indicating various changes Woolf made in the drafts of the speech have been omitted in all quotations from this book. The rather peculiar punctuation is Woolf's own.

[17]Virginia Woolf, The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume Two 1920-1924, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p. 226.

[18]Virginia Woolf, The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volume Four 1929-1931, eds. Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), p. 203.

[19]Virginia Woolf, "Revolving Lights," Women and Writing, p. 191.

Chapter II: The Female Sentence

[1]Virginia Woolf does not use the phrase "female sentence" in A Room of One's Own although she does discuss the idea as well as the concept of a "man's sentence . . . unsuited for a woman's use" (Rm., p. 77). The phrase "woman's sentence" does appear in Woolf's review of Revolving Lights first printed in The Times Literary Supplement, May 19, 1923, and reprinted in Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing, ed. Michèle Barrett (London: The Women's Press, 1979), pp. 191-92. Woolf also uses the phrase "sentence of the feminine gender" in this review (p. 191).

[2]For a more complete discussion of the idea of women authors disguising themselves behind male pseudonyms see Mary Jacobus, "The Difference of View," Women Writing and Writing about Women, ed. Mary Jacobus (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 10-21.

[3]Jacobus, Women Writing, p. 12.

[4]Jacobus appears to be using the notions of textuality and difference suggested by Jacques Derrida in Writing and Difference (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978). I do not use the word "traces" in the specifically Derridean sense.

[5]Virginia Woolf, "Women and Fiction," Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing, p. 48.

[6]Virginia Woolf, "The Tunnel," Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing, p. 190.

[7]Virginia Woolf, "Revolving Lights," Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing, p. 191.

[8]G. B. Sinclair, "Of Two Minds," Saturday Night, 95, No. 7 (September 1980), p. 20.

[9]For a further discussion of the evidence see: Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise (London: Harper Colophon Books, 1976); Julia O'Faolain and Lauro Martines, eds., Not in God's Image: Women in History from the Greeks to the Victorians (London: Harper Colophon Books, 1973); Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

[10]Thomas J. Farrel, "The Female and Male Modes of Rhetoric," College English, 40, No. 8 (April 1979), pp. 909-21.

[11]Virginia Woolf, "Revolving Lights," Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing, p. 191.

[12]Mary Hiatt, The Way Women Write (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1977).

[13]A brief list of definitions of the rhetorical devices referred to follows (source Hiatt):
anacoluthia: changing from one grammatical construction to another in the same sentence
asyndeton: absence of conjunctions in triplets or series
polysyndeton: repetitive use of conjunctions in triplets or series
anaphora: repetition of the same word or words at the beginning of phrases or clauses in sequence
tmesis: repetition of a word with one or a few words in between.

[14]Robin Lakoff, "Women's Language," Language and Style, 10, No. 4 (Fall 1977), pp. 222-47.

[15]Phyllis Chesler, Women and Madness (New York: Avon Books, 1972).

[16]The most blatantly hostile review of Three Guineas is Q. D. Leavis' "Caterpillars of the Commonwealth Unite," Scrutiny, 7, No. 2 (September 1938), pp. 203-14. In this review Leavis calls Woolf's book "Nazi dialectic without Nazi conviction" and "the art of living as conceived by a social parasite." The reviewer goes on to accuse Woolf of "boudoir scholarship" and ends by implying that Woolf is not a "woman capable of justifying her existence in any walk of life."

[17]These techniques of repetition are similar to those employed by Gertrude Stein in works such as "Lifting Belly" or "Patriarchal Poetry" reprinted in The Yale Gertrude Stein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

[18]Anthony Burgess, "The Book is Not for Reading," New York Times Book Review, Dec. 4, 1966, pp. 1 & 74, as quoted in Mary Ellmann, Thinking About Women (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), p. 23.

[19]Mrs. Humphrey Ward, from the dedication to Eleanor (London: Harper and Brothers, 1901), n.p.

[20]Virginia Woolf, "The Tunnel," Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing, p. 190.

[21]For example Hiatt shows that women balance adverbs of pace with those of emotion while men use four times as many adverbs of pace. Women also use significantly more parallel constructions, especially "complex doublets" which Hiatt defines as a doublet reinforced by one or more rhetorical devices.

[22]Hiatt, The Way Women Write, p. 122.

[23]Virginia Woolf, The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume 1, 1915-1919, ed. A. O. Bell (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p. 315.

[24]Mary Jacobus, "The Question of Language," Critical Inquiry, 8, No. 2 (Winter 1981), p. 222.

[25]Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," Critical Inquiry, 8, No. 2 (Winter 1981), p. 205. Again we can see the influence of Derrida's theories of difference on the critic.

[26]Mary Hiatt, "The Sexology of Style," Language and Style, 9, No. 2 (Spring 1976), p. 106.

Chapter III: Metaphor and the Exploration of Female Sexuality

[1]Ted Cohen, "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy," Critical Inquiry, 5, No. 1 (Autumn 1978), p. 8. The definition of metaphor as a balanced relationship between "maker" and "appreciator," one issuing an invitation and the other expending an effort, is his!

[2]Virginia Woolf, "Professions for Women," Women and Writing, ed. Michèle Barrett (London: The Women's Press Ltd., 1979), pp. 61-62. These lines represent the solid object as obstacle--an obstruction to accomplishment. In her fiction solid objects are more frequently life rafts, symbols of stability and achievement. The exception is the story "Solid Objects" where the protagonist's life is frozen by his obsession with forms. There are no female characters in the story.

[3]My discussion of female sexual metaphor is based on the criteria suggested by Ellen Moers, "Metaphors: A Postlude," Literary

Women: The Great Writers (New York: Anchor Books, 1977), pp. 369-401.

[4]Virginia Woolf, The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume 4 1931-1935, ed. A. O. Bell (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), p. 6.

[5]Virginia Woolf, "The Introduction," Mrs. Dalloway's Party, ed. Stella McNichol (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 4. This is a posthumous collection of stories.

[6]Herbert Marder, Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968). For a discussion of the walrus brush as it relates to Eleanor's sense of self and of time passing see page 102.

[7]For a lengthier and somewhat different discussion of coins in Virginia Woolf, see Marder, pp. 98-103. In contrast to the purity of coins in Eleanor's hands are the rather soiled coins that Abel Pargiter's crippled hand gives to his children and his mistress as rewards or bribes. A corrupt man, Abel finds no integrity in the coins that slip from hand to hand.

[8]James Naremore, "Nature and History in The Years," Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity, ed. Ralph Freedman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). Naremore identifies the statue on page 256.

[9]Rhoda's "tunnels" and "eternal corridors" are related to the metaphor of life as "being blown through the Tube at fifty miles an hour" that occurs in Virginia Woolf, "The Mark on the Wall," A Haunted House and Other Short Stories (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1972), p. 38). The endless tunnel or corridor is a symbol for Woolf of the empty, random life lived too rapidly and without focus. The narrator of "The Mark," in contrast to Rhoda, finds a solid object to focus on, a snail on the wall. Even such an insignificant form can be a "plank in the sea" (HH., p. 44) and the character is saved from the fate of the tunnel's nihilistic evocation of life.

[10]Moers, p. 387.

[11]Moers, pp. 396-99.

[12]Moers, p. 385.

[13]To mention just a few of those predatory male birds: Abel Pargiter's right hand resembles "the claw of some aged bird," the men at Kitty's party are "gulls settling on fish" (Y., p. 199), while the young man Peggy meets declaims "I, I, I . . . like a vulture's beak pecking" (Y., p. 275). Even Septimus Smith is a "young hawk" (MD., p. 222) compared to his wife Rezia who is likened to a "bird sheltering under the thin hollow of a leaf" (MD., p. 99). The exception is Susan whom Louis views as a predatory bird. "To be loved by Susan would be to be impaled by a bird's sharp beak," he thinks. The image is not without its appeal to Louis who goes on, "there are moments when I could wish to be speared

by a beak, to be nailed to a barnyard door, positively, once and for all" (W., pp. 80-81).

[14]For a poignant description of the fragile life, obsessive behavior and ultimate helplessness of the moth, one need only read Woolf's essay, "The Death of the Moth." In the stillness of mid-day, all of nature seems to mourn the valiant effort of the moth in its futile struggle with death. It is this combination of fragility and valiance of spirit which Woolf connects with the insect, that is metaphorically transferred to Rachel Vinrace.

[15]For an excellent discussion of disembodiment in this and other Woolf novels see: Stephen Trombley, "The Problem of Embodiment," 'All that Summer She was Mad': Virginia Woolf and Her Doctors (London: Junction Books, 1981).

Chapter IV: Androgyny and the Female Artist

[1]The major discussions of androgyny in Woolf's work are: Carolyn Heilbrun, Toward a Recognition of Androgyny (New York: Harper Collophon Books, 1973); Nancy Topping Bazin, Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973); Winnifred Holtby, "Two in a Taxi," Virginia Woolf: A Critical Memoir (Chicago: Cassandra Editions, 1973); Herbert Marder, "The Androgynous Mind," Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968).

[2]Phyllis Rose, "Vita Sackville-West and Androgyny," Woman of Letters: A Life of Virginia Woolf (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). In her discussion of Woolf's use of androgyny Rose emphasizes the importance of the cerebral relationship of male and female for Woolf.

[3]Woolf's objections to the male ego are made abundantly clear--if never quite explicitly--in A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas as well as in her characterization of men in the novels. In A Room Woolf writes, with growing irony, of reading male writers, "it was delightful to read a man's writing again. It was so direct, so straightforward after the writing of women. It indicated such freedom of mind, such liberty of person, such confidence in himself . . . . But after reading a chapter or two a shadow seemed to lie across the page. It was a straight dark bar, a shadow shaped something like the letter 'I'" (Rm., p. 98). In her review "Men and Women," originally published in The Times Literary Supplement, 18 March 1920, Woolf wrote that the "garrulous sex . . . is not the female but the male; in all the libraries of the world the man is to be heard talking to himself and for the most part about himself."

[4]See Rose, pp. 189-90 for a discussion of the idea of transcendence of sex differences as it appears in Woolf's work, particularly her criticism.

[5]Stephen Trombley, "The Problem of Embodiment," 'All that Summer She was Mad': Virginia Woolf and Her Doctors (London: Junction Books, 1981), p. 26.

[6]Trombley, p. 29.

[7]Trombley, p. 28.

[8]Trombley, p. 31.

[9]See Bazin, p. 77 for a discussion of the significance of William Rodney's full name.

[10]In her chapter "Jacob's Room and Mrs. Dalloway," Bazin does a quite thorough character assassination of Clarissa, pp. 121-23.

[11]Woolf suggests that women are traditionally reflectors of the male ego in A Room of One's Own, p. 37--"Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size."

[12]For a discussion of the six characters of The Waves as aspects of a single character see Harvena Richter, The Inward Voyage (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 247-48.

[13]Rose, p. 182.

[14]Rose, pp. 184-85.

[15]For a discussion of the myths of androgyny in a feminist light see: Cynthia Secour, "Androgyny: An Early Reappraisal," Women's Studies, 2, No. 2 (1974), pp. 160-69; Daniel Harris, "Androgyny: The Sexist Myth in Disguise," Women's Studies, 2, No. 2 (1974), pp. 171-84.

[16]James Naremore, "Nature and History in The Years," Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity, ed. Ralph Freedman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 253. Naremore points out the relationship between the careers chosen by the Pargiter men and the institutions ridiculed by Woolf in Three Guineas.

[17]Virginia Woolf, The Pargiters, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977); see "Fifth Essay," pp. 106-30, for a discussion of the ignorance of young women of the day in matters sexual.

[18]Bazin, p. 201.

[19]Bazin, p. 201.

[20]Heilbrun, p. x.

Continuity: A Postlude

[1]For a more thorough discussion of Woolf's importance in the tradition see: Louise Bernikow, Among Women (New York: Harmony Books, 1980); Judy Chicago, The Dinner Party (New York: Anchor Books, 1979); Ellen Moers, Literary Women (New York: Anchor Books, 1977).

[2]Judy Chicago, p. 95.

[3]Marge Piercy, "Unlearning to not speak," To Be of Use (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1973), p. 38.

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